



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
Senate 429: Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act**

**Budget and Taxation Committee/Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Position: Oppose
February 18, 2025**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Vice-Chairwoman Kagan,

I am Heidi Stevens, United Way of Central Maryland, Director of Community Schools in Baltimore City. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 429, which would substantially reduce the promised education funding under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Delays in funding for community schools will widen the achievement gap and leave vulnerable students without the necessary support systems. Schools that were promised additional resources through Concentration of Poverty grants will not see the funds when they need them most.

As the director of six community schools and a former Community School Coordinator, I have witnessed students thrive academically through tutoring programs, summer learning programs, and enriching after-school activities. Additionally, I have seen students grow emotionally through mental health support services. Without funding for education, districts will lose the hard-earned progress achieved in recent years, and students, along with their families, will not receive the quality of education they deserve.

Maryland made a commitment to improving education through the Blueprint, but SB429 weakens these efforts when schools need support the most. Rather than cutting funding, the legislature should uphold its promise to students, educators, and families by maintaining the investments that were pledged.

Please vote no on SB429 and stand with those who believe in fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Heidi Stevens
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