

**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 12, 2025

My name is Alison Hooper, and I am the mother of a 2 year old with Down Syndrome, former Anne Arundel Co science teacher and current active duty military spouse living in California but voting in 21401 Annapolis and also building a home in 21811 Berlin, Maryland. I am submitting this testimony **in strong opposition to Senate Bill 429**, which would significantly cut promised education funding under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This bill undermines the investments our state has committed to making in our students, our teachers, and the future of our communities. We chose to build in Maryland and raise our three children there because of the strong history of resources in Special Education and the great experience I had in the classroom when teaching in Glen Burnie.

One of the things Maryland often gets right and is an easy decision for military families when discussing where to house hunt, are the reliability of the schools. Cuts to per-pupil foundation funding will mean fewer resources for classrooms, including teacher salaries, instructional materials, and critical student services. Schools already struggling to meet the needs of students will be forced to make tough choices, like increasing class sizes. Without adequate funding, many teachers will leave the profession, making teacher shortages worse. One of the biggest stressors as an educator is working 40+ hours in the building and then having to work several more hours after taking care of our family in the evening, just to be adequately prepared for our most deserving students. Cutting funding will add more responsibilities to an already overburdened staff who can easily take their talents elsewhere or decide it's not worth their valuable time.

At a time when Maryland is experiencing a teacher shortage, delaying collaborative time grants will prevent teachers from receiving necessary professional development and planning time. These grants help educators collaborate, improve instruction, and better support students. Without them, schools will struggle to retain talented teachers. As a former middle school teacher we relied heavily on our team meetings and collaborative time together to ensure all students were being seen as a whole child and what areas we could assist each other to make sure they were exceeding standards in all core classes- collaborating with special education professionals me with the tools necessary to cover down when schedule changes or teacher absence occurred. There is no business in the United States that doesn't offer time for their team delivering a product to work together to ensure each of their success, no CEO would cut proven methods that assist in their company's success. Education isn't a competition, it is created around collaboration and 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.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 429 and prioritize the future of Maryland's students - prioritize generating progressive revenue through the passage of Fair Share Maryland. Cutting funding now will have long-term consequences that harm not just our schools, but our communities as a whole. 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,

Alison McGorry Hooper

Constituent, special needs parent, former AACO middle school science teacher

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