

Stand by Maryland's Promise to our Children

Position Statement in Opposition to Senate Bill 429

Given before the Budget and Taxation Committee and the Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is a promise made by the Maryland General Assembly to our state's children. It is the result of four years of diligent research by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. It is also a system of mutually reinforcing strategies, no one of which is sufficient on its own. When lawmakers passed the Blueprint in 2020, then resoundingly overrode Republican Governor Larry Hogan's veto in 2021, they sent a clear message: the state of Maryland values public education. Senate Bill 429 would undermine this promise by decoupling the Blueprint's component strategies and slashing public school funding for more than a decade.

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy opposes Senate Bill 429.

Lawmakers designed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future around a unified strategy developed by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education over several years of research and deliberation. As the commission's final report states:¹

While the Commission's recommendations are grouped by policy area, a fundamental premise of the Commission's work is that the recommendations are interrelated, and Maryland will only see the intended results if they are implemented in tandem. The Commission crafted an implementation strategy that weaves the recommendations together so that over time the entire education system is strengthened, resulting in improved student performance.

Increased collaborative planning time for teachers is a core component of the Blueprint strategy. It increases teachers' capacity to meet students' diverse needs, enables greater cross-pollination of effective strategies, and contributes to strong recruitment and retention. By rolling back collaborative planning time, Senate Bill 429 both sacrifices those direct benefits and renders all other components of the Blueprint strategy less effective.

Impacts of Senate Bill 429 on collaborative planning time:

- The bill eliminates funding for FY 2026 (\$163 per pupil cut) to FY 2029 (\$698 per pupil cut).
- Delayed phase-in cuts \$728 per pupil in FY 2030, increasing to \$829 per pupil cut in FY 2033.
- The bill does not adjust the delayed phase-in for inflation, resulting in a *permanent* cut, likely exceeding 8%.

Moreover, because of the way Maryland's school funding formula is built, cutting per-pupil foundation funding automatically reduces targeted funding to support students who face barriers in the classroom:ⁱⁱ

- Senate Bill 429 cuts compensatory education funding for students with low family income by \$139 per eligible pupil in FY 2026, increasing to \$605 cut per eligible pupil in FY 2033.
- Senate Bill 429 cuts funding for English learners by \$160 per eligible pupil in FY 2026, increasing to \$705 cut per eligible pupil in FY 2033.

These cuts are not driven by any of the bill's stated policy goals. They are a simply mathematical ripple effect – collateral damage to the students with the greatest needs.

The bill prevents similar cuts to targeted special education funding for students with disabilities by replacing the percentage weights in current law with per-eligible-pupil dollar amounts based on the current-law foundation amount. This provision is positive, insofar as it limits the damage the bill would otherwise do. However, it raises two issues:

- Students with disabilities are still harmed by reduced foundation funding, just like every other student. Furthermore, Maryland's thousands of students with disabilities who also have low family incomes or are English learners are harmed by cuts to these programs. Make no mistake: **Senate Bill 429 does not spare students with disabilities.**
- There is no reason why lawmakers could not use a similar approach to limit harm to students with low family incomes and English learners. Senate Bill 429 is fundamentally flawed; at the same time, shielding *all* targeted funding from the ripple effects of foundation cuts would limit the damage.

Senate Bill 429 does further, *targeted* harm to students in high-poverty, often racially segregated neighborhoods, by cutting concentration of poverty funding for FY 2027 to FY 2031. For a school that has long served such a neighborhood, the cut in FY 2028 would be 34% of concentration of poverty per-pupil funding.ⁱⁱⁱ

Enacting Senate Bill 429 would repeat policymakers' mistakes in the aftermath of the Great Recession. At the height of Thornton funding formula implementation in FY 2008, 23 of the state's 24 local school systems were at least 95% funded according to contemporary standards. By FY 2015, only six districts met that standard, and more than half of all Black students in Maryland went to school in a district that was underfunded by at least 15%. Senate Bill 429 is the first step toward a similar fate.

Senate Bill 429 is a counterproductive response to two legitimate challenges:

- Maryland schools continue to face severe teacher staffing shortages, hindering implementation of the Blueprint's collaborative planning time goals. **Senate Bill 429 takes resources away from schools because they are facing serious challenges, a backward approach.**
- The state faces severe and growing budget shortfalls. However, Senate Bill 429 will likely reduce long-term revenue growth by fostering a less well-educated population. Gov. Moore's revenue package is a strong step in the right direction. **Lawmakers should build on this progress and protect public**

schools by adopting more ambitious provisions from the Fair Share for Maryland Act (Senate Bill 859).

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the Budget and Taxation Committee and the Committee on Energy, Education, and the Environment make an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 429.

Equity Impact Analysis: Senate Bill 429

Bill summary

Senate Bill 429 reduces public school funding through multiple changes to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future school funding formula, in addition to other provisions.

Background

The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education was established in 2016 to complete the review of Maryland's education funding policies as required under the 2002 Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act. The General Assembly passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, based on the Kirwan Commission recommendations, in 2020 and overrode then-Gov. Hogan's veto in 2021.

As of 2017, only six of the state's 24 school districts were at or near the state's contemporary funding standards.

Equity Implications

Maryland's pre-Blueprint education policies poses significant equity concerns:

- As of 2017, only six of the state's 24 school districts were funded at or above 95 percent of the Bridge to Excellence standard, despite higher academic expectations that render that standard inadequate.
- More than half of Black students in Maryland went to school in a district that was funded at least 15 percent below the Bridge to Excellence standard in 2017, as did 37 percent of Latinx students and 13 percent of white students.
- Maryland public schools are among the most racially segregated in the United States.^{iv} Segregation is intrinsically harmful and must ultimately be solved by meaningful integration; furthermore, inequitable school funding creates greater racial imbalances in a segregated school system.
- Multiple independent analyses have found that the wealthiest schools in Maryland were better funded than the least wealthy schools.
- Inequitable access to high-quality pre-K-12 education contributes to inequitable opportunities later in life—to pursue higher education, to build a fulfilling and well-paying career, or to have a safe home in a thriving community.

The Blueprint put us on a path to mitigate—though not eliminate—these inequities:

- Strengthening overall state investments in public schools improves all students' access to a great education, and this improvement is most meaningful for students who today face barriers that prevent them from getting the education they deserve.
- The new concentrated poverty program will enable schools that face many of the greatest challenges to deliver the specific services their students need, such as on-site physical and mental health care. Both

racial income inequality and residential segregation increase the likelihood that students of color will live in a high-poverty neighborhood.

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Impact

Senate Bill 429 would likely **worsen racial and economic inequity** in Maryland.

ⁱ <https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabMtg/CmsnInnovEduc/2020-Final-Report-of-the-Commission.pdf>

ⁱⁱ MDCEP calculations

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^{iv} Gary Orfield, Jongyeun Ee, Erica Frankenberg, and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "Brown at 62: School Segregation by Race, Poverty and State," Civil Rights Project / *Proyecto Derechos Civiles*, UCLA, 2016, <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/brown-at-62-school-segregation-by-race-poverty-and-state/Brown-at-62-final-corrected-2.pdf>

^v MDCEP calculations.

Appendix: Suggested Targeted Program Per-Pupil Amounts

FY	Compensatory Education	English Learners
2026	7,842	9,041
2027	7,786	9,148
2028	7,908	9,327
2029	8,029	9,613
2030	8,363	9,794
2031	8,582	10,069
2032	8,448	10,232
2033	9,026	10,510