

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

Budget and Taxation Committee/Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 19, 2025

My name is Dr. Amanda Jozkowski, and I am a parent, a full-time educator, and the PTA Advocacy Chair at Freedom Elementary (Carroll County's most overcrowded public school). I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 429, which proposes significant cuts to the promised education funding under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This bill threatens the investments our state has committed to making in our students, our teachers, and the future of our communities.

Since the economic downturn in 2008, Carroll County Public Schools has balanced its budget by cutting over 375 staff members and reducing spending across the board. These measures have already compromised our school system's ability to deliver quality education, and further cuts as proposed in SB429 would exacerbate these issues dramatically in the following ways:

1. The proposed cuts to per-pupil foundation funding will lead to fewer resources for classrooms - including support staff, instructional materials, and student services. Due to the overly stringent fiscal compliance guidelines in the Blueprint, our county is already forced to cut a large number of employee positions and shift many others, which we anticipate will increase class sizes up to 44 students in Carroll. Beyond the immediate safety concerns this poses, cuts to per-pupil funding will further diminish the quality of education for many students.
2. Carroll County, like many others, receives additional funding for special education students and multilingual learners. There is ample evidence that these groups have a wide achievement gap in relation to their peers. The proposed bill will limit resources for the students who need them most, directly harming those who rely on specialized support to thrive academically and socially.
3. Delaying funding for collaborative time grants under SB429 will hinder our teachers' professional development and their ability to plan effectively. Not only can collaborative grants help enhance teaching strategies and support student success, but at a time when Maryland is experiencing a teacher shortage the proposed delay will make it even more difficult for Carroll and other counties to retain talented teachers.

I urge you to reject SB429 and uphold the commitments made in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which is already underfunded. Our community depends on the foundation funds, and our children deserve no less. We must not compromise on the quality of education and the future of our students. I ask you to stand with me and other concerned parents to invest in public education and the development of our future leaders. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Jozkowski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda Jozkowski, PhD, OTR/L

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