

**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 17, 2025

My name is Jenna Hugg, and I am a parent of a current and future public school student from Carroll County. 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.

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. Funding cuts have already impacted the ability for each student to have a laptop assigned making it impossible to offer virtual learning on snow days or in the event of any school shut down.

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. My student was identified for early intervention services which allowed her to receive individual attention. These education services in collaboration with her general learning resulted in her scoring a 93% on the CCPS Mid-Year Benchmark Assessment, the County Average for her grade was 86%. Further monetary cuts and restrictions will impact the quality and availability of such specialized attention.

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. These grants provide essential services such as mental health care, after-school programs, and multilingual support for students. Several multilingual students have received the same services and similar programs as my daughter and have helped students in the same way. The delay in funding will harm the measurable progress of at-risk students who need our help the most.

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,
Jenna Hugg**