

**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
Senate 429/House Bill 504: Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee/Education, Energy, and the Environment Committees
House Appropriations/Ways and Means Committees**

**Position: Oppose
February 19, 2025**

My name is Maya Bond, and I am an advocate from Baltimore 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.

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.

As a member of the Baltimore County Education Justice Table (BCEJT), I have partnered with many Community School Facilitators across the county on events and canvasses that have aided community schools within their first two years of implementation. Baltimore County will lose a total of over \$770,000 of expected per-pupil funds between FY26 and FY33 if collaboration time funding is paused for 4 years and over \$50,000,000 of expected concentration of poverty funds if frozen at FY26 levels for two years. This will have a disproportionate impact for not only the students who have benefitted from efforts such as food pantries, school supply drives and community garden initiatives, but also have a disproportionate impact on the ability of Community School Facilitators trust to be built within the community.

For example, the Community School Facilitator at Bear Creek Elementary is only entering their second year of community school implementation and has already done an incredible job with establishing partnerships to bring an array of after school activities like boys/girl scouts and dance programs for students but are already struggling with the current needs of the school population to also have translation services to ensure more families are able to participate and learn about opportunities the school plans on offering. Bear Creek Elementary will be losing over \$1,240,000 between FY27 and FY31 that was previously expected due to the proposed two year freeze. The Baltimore County Education Justice Table has helped put on a canvass and community event that has increased their family and local community member presence on the shared decision making committee for the school, however the loss of this amount of funds will severely limit the feasibility of being able implement the great ideas the school community has come together to brainstorm.

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,

Maya Bond

Baltimore County Education Justice Table

maya@wewontkeepquiet.org