



Senate Bill 852: Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Alterations
Senate Appropriations and Ways & Means Committees
Position: Support with Amendment
March 5, 2025

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates committed to securing full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Our goal is to ensure every student graduates ready to thrive. We support parts of Senate Bill 852 but recommend significant amendments due to concerns about key provisions.

We strongly endorse elements of the bill that promote equity and improve educational access:

- **Expanded Definition of "Tier I Child"** (Page 13, Lines 14–27): This change broadens eligibility for publicly funded prekindergarten, ensuring children with disabilities and those from multilingual households gain greater access to early education.
- **Study on National Board Certification** (Page 16, Lines 18–30): Evaluating the impact of National Board Certification on teacher effectiveness and retention is critical for strengthening Maryland's educator workforce.
- **Special Education Funding Study** (Page 17, Lines 1–26): Assessing the adequacy of special education funding is a necessary step toward ensuring students with disabilities receive the resources they need.

We propose the elimination of the following provisions in SB 852 as they raise concerns regarding equity and Blueprint implementation:

- **Waiving Minimum School Funding for Smaller Schools** (Page 4, Line 4): The minimum funding requirement ensures that resources follow students. The Blueprint mandates that at least 75% of funding must follow students, with no upper limit on additional resources a school can receive. While schools with fewer than 350 students may appear overfunded, this waiver does not address that issue. Instead, it risks undermining funding equity for high-need student populations.
- **Aggregating Provisions of 5–234 at the School Level** (Page 4, Lines 5–6): Aggregation would make it significantly harder to track whether Blueprint funds are being used as intended. The Blueprint's categorical funding structure ensures resources are targeted to specific priorities. Aggregating expenditures at the school level would obscure whether funds are actually being spent on essential initiatives or being redirected elsewhere. Breaking down expenditures by category is not just a bureaucratic exercise; it is a critical safeguard to ensure funding supports students as intended. Simply showing that money reaches a school does not guarantee it is being spent on the right supports for the students who need them most.
- **Post-CCR Pathway Eligibility and FARMS Limitations** (Page 14, Line 3 – Page 15, Line 13): The bill permits county boards to impose income eligibility limits for post-college and career readiness (CCR) pathway costs, excluding students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS). However, FARMS is widely recognized as an incomplete measure of financial need. Many families above the FARMS threshold still struggle with education-related expenses. We urge a broader approach to eligibility that considers regional cost-of-living differences and acknowledges that FARMS alone does not capture the full scope of economic hardship.

- **Limiting AIB Authority Over Collective Bargaining** (Page 4, Lines 19–24): This provision is unnecessary. The AIB already lacks authority over collective bargaining beyond career ladder provisions, making this change redundant and irrelevant to improving Blueprint implementation.

We urge the Committee to amend Senate Bill 852 by removing the provisions that could weaken equity and funding while preserving the essential studies and expanded prekindergarten eligibility. The Blueprint Coalition believes these amendments will help keep the bill aligned with the goal of providing equitable, high-quality education for all Maryland students. **For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report only with major amendments to Senate Bill 852.**

Please contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.