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BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

BILL: House Bill 1421

TITLE: Accountability and Implementation Board – Scope of Authority

SPONSOR: Delegate Miller

HEARING DATE: March 6, 2025

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Accountability and Implementation Board for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (AIB) **OPPOSES House Bill 1421 – Accountability and Implementation Board – Scope of Authority**, which would eliminate independent, external oversight of the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

The bill, if enacted, removes the AIB's status as an independent unit of State government responsible for the oversight of Blueprint implementation. It establishes the State Board of Education (State Board) as the head of the AIB and requires the AIB to operate subject to the State Board's bylaws, rules and regulations. Further, it removes the decision-making authority of the AIB to hold the State, local governments, and the government agencies with responsibilities for Blueprint implementation, which includes the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), accountable for progress towards Blueprint outcomes and places that authority with the State Board.

To ensure the achievement of the goals of the ambitious and transformative Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Blueprint law (Chapter 36 of 2021) established the AIB as an independent unit of State government to oversee the successful implementation of the Blueprint. The General Assembly charged the AIB with evaluating data submitted to it by the units of government responsible for implementing any part of the Blueprint, assessing the effectiveness of the implementation, and holding the State and local governments accountable for implementing the Blueprint with fidelity. Those units of government include the State Board, MSDE, and local education agencies (LEAs), but also include the Maryland Higher Education Commission, institutions of higher education, the Career and Technical Education Committee, the Consortium for Coordinated Community Supports, the Maryland Department of Health, and local workforce development boards.

In establishing the AIB during the 2020 session, the General Assembly thoughtfully and carefully considered the Board's role, responsibilities, and authority, as well as issues of transparency, outcomes, and accountability. Their consideration included input from a broad array of stakeholders, including MSDE, LEAs, county boards and governments, employee groups, employers, education advocates, and community members and organizations.

The AIB recognizes that the Legislature created the AIB to oversee and coordinate Blueprint implementation across State and local P-12, higher education, and workforce development systems, not to directly implement programs. The AIB with its purposely small staff was not built to implement large programs. The AIB is also not a permanent board. Once the Blueprint is fully implemented and its job is finished, the AIB is set to terminate in the law (currently 2032), unless there is a determination that it is still necessary.

In the early years of implementation, the AIB took on greater program implementation responsibilities than originally anticipated. In response to a 2022 request from local superintendents, for example, the AIB and State Board have worked together to develop joint guidance for LEAs on several components of Blueprint implementation. As the Blueprint for Maryland's Future moves from the initial implementation phase to ongoing implementation and evaluation of progress, and with improved leadership and capacity at MSDE, the AIB is committed to continuing to identify and establish clear lines of responsibility. The AIB and the State Board are clarifying our roles and responsibilities and will enter into a formal agreement to provide increased clarity to State and local partners.

The AIB will continue to focus on the fidelity of implementation and evaluating the progress of the Blueprint, while the State Board and MSDE continue to serve as the primary policy-making entity on matters of instruction. And, while an important role of the AIB is to pursue inter-agency coordination and cooperation, both between it and other agencies and among other agencies, those efforts must not dilute the AIB's ability to require that agencies fulfill their responsibilities to achieve the Blueprint's intended outcomes and to hold them accountable if they fail to do so.

For these reasons, the AIB **OPPOSES House Bill 1421** and strongly urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report. For more information, please contact Joy Schaefer, Government Relations Director at joy.schaefer@maryland.gov or (410) 991-7326.