



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 976: Primary and Secondary Education – Funding Accuracy and Full-Time
Equivalent Enrollment Count – Alterations and Report**

Appropriations Committee

Position: Oppose

March 3, 2026

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 976**, which proposes altering the definition of "full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment" by averaging student counts from September 30 and May 31 of the prior school year.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future sets an ambitious goal: a world-class public school system. That goal depends on predictable, equity-driven investment. Under current law, per-pupil funding is based on a September 30 enrollment snapshot. This approach gives local school systems reliable data early in the academic year, allowing them to hire educators, finalize transportation contracts, and allocate resources based on the students actually enrolled.

HB 976 conflicts directly with the State's constitutional budget timeline. If state aid is tied to a May 31 enrollment count, the General Assembly would be required to finalize billions of dollars in education funding weeks before that data exists. This creates a "data lag" that would force the State to rely on outdated projections, undermining the very "accuracy" this bill claims to seek.

This "two-point average" would also create a structural disadvantage for schools serving our most vulnerable populations. High-poverty areas often experience higher "student mobility" due to housing instability or seasonal employment.

- HB 976 effectively penalizes districts for student mobility.
- This approach risks stripping resources away from the schools that the *Blueprint* identifies as needing the most support, further widening the achievement gap.

Student attendance is vital, but HB 976 is not an attendance-improvement measure; it is a funding-reduction measure that is administratively unworkable within the State's legislative calendar. This legislation will not help us reach our goal of "World-Class" schools; instead, it will create unavoidable fiscal instability.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 976.

For more information, contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org