



## Senate Bill 311

### *Education – The Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT WITH  
AMENDMENTS**

To: Appropriations and Ways & Means  
Committees

Date: April 2, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 311 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill seeks to adjust a number of components of the State's visionary education plan, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint). The provisions of the bill focus broadly on school funding, teacher recruitment and preparation, college and career readiness, and resource allocation in community schools. Accordingly, MACo offers context below on two overarching challenges that amendments to the bill seek to address.

The shifts proposed in SB 311 have the potential to come at a time when the Blueprint plan faces an environment dramatically unlike that envisioned during its initial forecasts. The pandemic, labor market, and cost-drivers have altered the underpinning of this landmark effort. County governments have been funding partners, making record-setting financial commitments over four years of the roll-out, with the vast majority of jurisdictions funding tens of millions of dollars over their local share of Blueprint costs. This reality runs counter to a founding assumption of the Blueprint, which anticipated all counties would eventually convert to the local share portion of funding. For fiscal year 2027, it is estimated that another three counties will actually convert to the maintenance of effort (MOE) portion of funding as local school systems plead with county governments to cover the substantial gaps left by the State's inadequate contributions (based on pre-pandemic assumptions, rather than actual implementation costs).

Even with these historic investments, education experts from across the state have highlighted challenges both operational and financial that could compromise the shared outcomes of the plan. SB 311 presents an opportunity to address some of those obvious and demonstrated challenges. While counties take no issue with the majority of the proposals in the bill, MACo offers some perspective on Blueprint implementation challenges as well as some narrow changes to enhance transparency and accountability.

First, SB 311 contains a provision to extend the period by which the existing calculation for compensatory education was intended to cover. This is the result of the State's failure to identify a new methodology that adequately captures the real consequences of poverty across the state by the specified deadline. Without this "hold harmless" for schools participating in the Community Eligibility Program, state and local funding for thousands of resource-scarce students would diminish significantly.

Counties have no quarrel fulfilling a new funding mandate that otherwise would leave behind students with the greatest need, due to a state-level failure. However, the need for this legislative change, like others, is triggered, once again, by the State's continued failure to meet the resource and timeline demands of the Blueprint. This lapse undermines the work local school systems, teachers, and support staff are doing every day in an attempt to realize the outcomes of the historic but severely flawed plan.

The absence of sufficient accountability for the State has the very real potential to compromise the outcomes of the Blueprint and squander billions in taxpayer-funded investment. Current amendments to SB 311 are superior to those offered on HB 490 by the House of Delegates, in that they extend the harmless hold for one year only and put the state agencies in a position to finish the necessary work on this matter by the end of the calendar year. Therefore, MACo urges the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees to keep the timelines set forth in SB 311 rather than amending the current HB 490 provisions on to SB 311.

Second, investments in education must continue to comply with robust transparency and accountability standards, especially as progress relates to the changes SB 311 demands. To this end, counties respectfully request an amendment to the bill to require the Maryland State Department of Education to report annually on the effects of any changes to the Blueprint, as well as regular reporting on components of the plan that local school systems have demonstrated are not working. Current reports offered by MSDE and the AIB lack a sufficient overview of statewide challenges despite the continued reporting of these problems by the school systems.

Significant reforms, such as those prescribed by the Blueprint, hold great promise but must be built to last. Course corrections in the face of significant obstacles will serve students, educators, and communities better in the long run. SB 311, with the reasonable changes outlined above, can ensure the reform plan will work for all students, teachers, and school leadership. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for SB 311.