



Testimony in SUPPORT of
Senate Bill 289: Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil Grants – Eligible Uses
Budget and Taxation Committee
Position: Favorable
February 3, 2026

Strong Schools Maryland is a statewide network of parents, educators, and advocates committed to the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can feel safe and supported to learn and thrive in their school community. As a result, **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 289 – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil Grants – Eligible.**

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future aims to transform Maryland’s public education system into a world class model, with community schools playing a central role in that vision. The community school model approach directs resources to meet needs identified through the school’s Need Assessment, in order to recognize that every community is different and therefore has unique needs. Because those needs vary, not just between communities but within communities, flexibility is essential to this work. Effectively allocating resources, providing social and emotional support, and meeting students and families where they are requires the ability to respond to each school community’s unique circumstance.

Currently, the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future states that concentration of poverty funds from the personnel and per pupil grants may be used through fiscal year 2027 to provide the programs required under COMAR 13A.04 ([2022, HB1450, §5-223\(c\)\(9\), Pg. 3](#), repeated in [2025, HB504§5-223\(c\)\(9\)](#), Pg. 16). These programs form the core subject areas of a public school students’ education: everything from science, mathematics, and fine arts to English language arts, social studies, and physical education. This regulation was purposeful as it allows for that spending flexibility and recognizes that meeting students’ needs requires the ability to invest across a wide range of academic programming. SB 289 protects that principle by eliminating the looming sunset that would unnecessarily restrict how concentration of poverty grant funds may be used.

The sunseting of this flexibility would force schools into artificial tradeoffs that do not reflect student needs and or our vision for community schools as schools could lose the ability to sustain staffing, programming, and instructional supports that have already been built using these funds. Maryland will only achieve a world-class school system if we sustain and bolster the tools that meet students where they are. Senate Bill 289 affirms trust in community schools, respects local expertise, and keeps the Blueprint aligned with its original promise.

For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 289.

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