



Testimony in OPPOSITION of

Senate Bill 329: Education – Certification of Scholarship Granting Organizations (Opting in on Opportunity Act)

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Oppose

February 27, 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. We advocate, build power, and share resources with invested Maryland residents to co-create strong public schools. **Strong Schools Maryland urges an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 329 – Education – Certification of Scholarship Granting Organizations (Opting in on Opportunity Act) which would require the Maryland State Department of Education to certify scholarship granting organizations in order to enable participation in a new federal tax credit program that subsidizes private school tuition.**

The Blueprint is a historic commitment to fully and equitably fund public education. Senate Bill 329 moves the State in the opposite direction as it would create a new mechanism to subsidize private school tuition while public schools remain responsible for serving every child, regardless of need, disability status, language background, or income. **Although the tax credit operates through the federal tax code, the effect is clear: it incentivizes individuals to redirect tax liability into contributions to private school scholarship organizations.** This will shift resources and policy focus away from Maryland's public school students to private schools.

Maryland public schools are required to provide services to students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students living in poverty, and students with complex academic and behavioral needs. The private schools that would benefit from these scholarships are not held to the same accountability, access, or transparency standards. Maryland is already facing fiscal pressure in fully funding compensatory education, special education, collaborative time, and community schools under the Blueprint.

In passing the Blueprint, the General Assembly made a promise that Maryland's public schools would be fully funded and among the best in the nation. At this moment, the State must hold the line on that commitment. We should be focused on securing sustainable revenue to meet

the Blueprint's obligations, not opening the door to policies that divert resources or dilute accountability.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was built to advance equity and accountability in public education. Senate Bill 329 would allow for the subsidization of private education without equivalent public accountability and without any requirement to serve all students.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 329.

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