

BILL: Senate Bill 343
TITLE: County Boards of Education – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs
HEARING DATE: February 18, 2026
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education across the State, **supports Senate Bill 343**. This bill would authorize local boards of education to develop income-eligibility guidelines and procedures governing payment of costs for post-college and career readiness pathways, while continuing to ensure that students from families below 400% of the federal poverty level receive access to these opportunities at no cost.

MABE’s foundational stance as an organization is that state and local legislative actions should not diminish local boards’ governance or budgetary authority, nor impose unfunded or inflexible mandates. Senate Bill 343 aligns squarely with this principle by restoring appropriate discretion to locally elected boards to implement Blueprint requirements in a manner that reflects local context, fiscal capacity, and community needs, while preserving one of the Blueprint’s core goals of expanding access to rigorous postsecondary and career pathways.

As local school systems continue to build their college and career readiness frameworks and supports, implementation has necessarily varied county by county. This variability has been compounded by evolving state guidance and sustained budget pressures at both the state and local levels. Senate Bill 343 provides practical, targeted flexibility that allows local boards to responsibly steward limited resources, sustain reforms over time, and avoid unintended fiscal strain, all without abandoning the equity-driven objectives of the Blueprint.

Consistent with MABE’s longstanding legislative priority to preserve and strengthen local decision-making authority, Senate Bill 343 represents a measured approach to Blueprint implementation. For these reasons, **MABE supports Senate Bill 343 and respectfully requests a favorable report.**