



February 16, 2026

**The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

RE: SB 343

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, particularly its emphasis on expanding access to high-quality college and career readiness pathways for all students.

We write to share concerns regarding SB 343 and its potential unintended consequences for Advanced Placement (AP) participation across Maryland. While we recognize the bill does not require districts to charge fees, it authorizes new district-level discretion to impose charges for AP coursework and exams for students from households above 400% of the federal poverty level. As drafted, this new authority introduces meaningful risk to AP access and participation that could undermine the Blueprint's core objectives.

AP is a proven, statewide lever for college readiness, postsecondary success, and affordability. Maryland has made significant progress in expanding AP access, participation, and performance through the Blueprint's full funding commitment. That progress is at risk if districts facing increased fiscal pressure choose to exercise the new fee authority provided by SB 343.

Based on internal analysis of Maryland AP participation, approximately 27.5% of all AP exams statewide are taken by students who could plausibly fall above the 400% FPL threshold and therefore become subject to new district-imposed fees. While not all of these students would opt out, experience shows that introducing fees, even for middle-income families, can influence course-taking and exam participation decisions, particularly for students taking multiple AP exams.

Additional concerns include:

- **Uneven access across districts**, as local discretion may result in a patchwork of policies driven by fiscal conditions rather than student readiness.
- **Lack of guardrails or implementation standards**, creating uncertainty for families, students, and educators.
- **Misalignment with Blueprint goals**, as even modest declines in AP participation run counter to the state's commitment to equitable access to rigorous coursework.

College Board supports many of the provisions already in the CCR pathway of the Blueprint because it:

- **Strengthens Maryland’s college- and career-readiness goals** under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.
- **Reduced overall college costs** for families by enabling students to earn credit or advanced standing before enrolling.
- **Supports workforce priorities** by preparing more students for high-demand pathways.
- **Improves AP participation and performance** in schools with historically low access to advanced courses.
- **Enhances Maryland’s competitiveness** by increasing the number of students completing rigorous coursework aligned to college expectations.
- **Leverages an existing, proven program** with strong statewide infrastructure and measurable results.

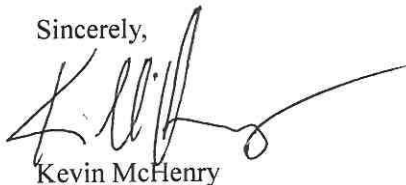
For these reasons, we respectfully urge the General Assembly to maintain full public funding for AP coursework and exams under the Blueprint.

As we have previously shared, early entry into college and career pathways—beginning as early as 10th grade—can meaningfully change student trajectories. These pathways introduce and strengthen essential workplace skills such as research, oral presentation, collaboration, and critical thinking. Our experience shows that taking just one AP course in 10th grade can influence what students choose to pursue throughout the rest of high school, whether that path ultimately leads to additional AP coursework, dual enrollment, or career and technical education (CTE).

Maryland’s investment in AP has delivered strong returns for students and for the state. Preserving that investment and the clarity it provides is essential to sustaining progress and ensuring that all students, regardless of zip code or family income, can access and benefit from advanced learning opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maryland students. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further or provide additional data as helpful.

Sincerely,



Kevin McHenry

Director, Government Relations