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Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



**SB 343 - County Boards of Education - Post College
and Career Readiness Pathways - Payment of Costs**
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 18, 2026
SUPPORT

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 343. This bill will establish income eligibility to assist students whose family is under 400% of the federal poverty level in paying fees associated with a certain post college and career readiness pathway.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

SB 343 provides Maryland schools with the flexibility that is needed to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation in programs that lead to college readiness and long-term economic mobility. This flexibility provides the option for counties to cater to the needs of their area and to their students.

The fees and program costs can prevent students from low- and moderate-income families from participating fully. SB 343 aligns with the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future by continuing to support equitable access while allowing county school systems to manage resources responsibly. While AP and IB exam fees are currently covered statewide, local systems continue to absorb significant costs to ensure student participation. SB 343 allows local discretion to target funding toward students with the greatest financial need, thus allowing schools to maintain access by reallocating limited resources to other priorities.

The approach of SB 343 recognizes that financial barriers do not end at graduation requirements, and that access to advanced coursework should not depend on a family's ability to pay. This recognition is especially important to student success, considering rising college tuition costs and the increasing burden of student loans.

The high cost of post-secondary education is a barrier that prevents many students from low to middle income families from attaining education post K-12. This has negative effects on the future potential earnings of students from low-to-middle income families. This is now compounded with changes that limit access to student loans on the federal level.

By reducing financial barriers to Post-CCR Pathways, SB 343 supports both economic stability for Maryland families and the readiness of future members of the workforce.

We respectfully encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 343.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

SB 343 - County Boards of Education - Post College

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FAV



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
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BILL: SB 343

TITLE: County Boards of Education – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents’ Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 343.

This legislation authorizes a county board of education to develop and establish income eligibility guidelines and procedures for payment of costs for certain post college and career readiness (post-CCR) pathways, and requires a county board to provide access to the post-CCR pathway at no cost to the student or parents if the student's family income is below 400% of the federal poverty level.

PSSAM thanks the sponsor for her leadership in putting forth this legislation that largely mirrors one of our [policy and legislative recommendations](#) (rec. 15) put forward last year. PSSAM and its superintendent members strongly support this legislation that would authorize county boards of education to develop income-eligibility guidelines for CCR.

Currently the Blueprint requires all students meeting CCR to enroll in a post-CCR pathway at no cost to the student or their families. These pathways include:

- Competitive entry college prep (IB, Cambridge, or AP).
- Dual enrollment leading to an associate degree or 60 college credits.
- Career and technical education (CTE) programs, apprenticeships, or industry certifications.

We believe that fully funding all post-CCR pathways for every eligible student may create significant financial strain on state and local budgets, and jeopardize the long-term sustainability of this initiative. Also, creating some guardrails for this generous opportunity may prevent overuse by some students who enroll in multiple pathways without a clear postsecondary or career plan, leading to wasted resources. Directing resources toward students who need them most ensures equitable access without overspending.

As we look for ways to make the Blueprint affordable, reigning in these costs should be seriously considered by the Legislature. Providing unlimited access to these resources raises fiscal and academic concerns; their use should be targeted to students for whom they are academically appropriate and beneficial. To ensure the sustainability of this popular and successful initiative, LEAs should have the flexibility to develop and establish income eligibility guidelines and procedures for payment of costs for these post-CCR opportunities.

Therefore, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 343 and kindly requests a **favorable** report.

Montgomery County Board of Education_SB 343_Support

Uploaded by: Patricia Ursprung

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

15 West Gude Drive ♦ Suite 100 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

BILL: Senate Bill 343

TITLE: County Boards of Education – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Support

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Patricia Ursprung, Coordinator, Legislative Affairs

The Montgomery County Board of Education supports Senate Bill 343.

This bill authorizes county boards of education to develop and implement income eligibility guidelines for the payment of costs associated with college preparatory programs, such as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program and Advanced Placement courses.

On August 21, 2025, the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) adopted a legislative platform that contains priority issues and ongoing concerns. One of the Board’s priority issues was to curtail costs associated with Blueprint-required funding of college preparatory programs.

Currently, the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (Blueprint) requires school systems to cover the costs of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams for all students who meet the College and Career Readiness standard. In FY25, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) spent close to \$5 million on AP and IB exams. At that time, the per-exam fees were as follows: \$90 for the AP exam, \$138 for the AP Capstone exam, and \$123 for the IB exam. The cost of each exam increases annually. A portion of the \$5 million was spent on exams that were purchased but never taken because the student either canceled or simply failed to show up for the exam.

Montgomery County is economically diverse. As a result, our schools provide services to families that experience substantial financial need, those who are fully economically stable, and many that fall somewhere in the middle. The Board is committed to making sure all students have access to the educational opportunities contained within the Blueprint and understands that not all families need the same level of support to make access possible. In order to maximize the funds that are allocated to us from our funding partners, the Board supports Senate Bill 343, which would allow



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

15 West Gude Drive ♦ Suite 100 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

us to utilize income eligibility guidelines to determine the level of financial support a family could receive in connection with participation in college preparatory programs. Any flexibility would better allow the Board to utilize the limited funds available to support all students attending MCPS. Equitable access to academic programs and opportunities for all students is not achieved through equal financial support to all families.

The Board requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 343.

SB 343 - Support - Post CCR Pathways Flexibility.p

Uploaded by: Sam Mathias

Position: FAV

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
CONTACT: Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director (smathias@mabe.org)

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.**

SB343 - King - Sponsor Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Nancy King

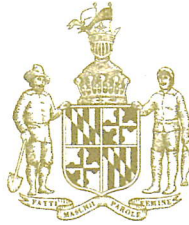
Position: FAV

NANCY J. KING
Legislative District 39
Montgomery County

MAJORITY LEADER

Budget and Taxation Committee

Chair
Education, Business, and
Administration Subcommittee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Senate Bill 343 – County Boards of Education –
Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs**

February 18, 2026

Mister Chairman and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future required the State Board of Education to adopt College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. The Blueprint further required local Boards of Education to provide all students who meet the CCR standard access to specific post-CCR pathways at no cost (including fees) to them or their parents.

This requirement under the Blueprint made programs like Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams free for all students regardless of income level. While this aligns with the Blueprint's vision of equity and universality, this mandated expense is creating a financial burden on our local school systems. For example, in FY2025 Montgomery County Public Schools spent in excess of \$4.2 million on AP and IB exams.

Senate Bill 343 will require school systems to continue to offer these exams for free for students with family income below 400% of the federal poverty level but would allow local school systems to develop and establish income eligibility guidelines and procedures for payment for those students with family income levels above 400% of the federal poverty level.

Passage of this legislation will allow school systems to continue covering exam costs for families with the greatest needs while allowing the school systems to reallocate funding to other essential programs, and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 343.

SB343_Cross_FavorableWithAmendments_Testimony (1).

Uploaded by: Dr Cashenna A Cross

Position: FWA

Testimony in Support With Amendments

Senate Bill 343 – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Chair, Vice Chair, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross, and I offer this testimony in support of Senate Bill 343 with amendments.

Throughout my career in public service — as a United States Air Force veteran, educator, municipal leader, and advocate for youth advancement — I have witnessed the transformational impact that occurs when preparation meets opportunity. When students are equipped early, families gain stability and communities gain strength.

Maryland's College and Career Readiness framework represents one of the most meaningful commitments we have made to our young people: that readiness for adulthood should never be determined by zip code or circumstance.

I support the intent of Senate Bill 343 because it recognizes the fiscal pressures local school systems face as participation in dual enrollment, career credentialing, apprenticeship, and advanced academic pathways continues to grow. Sustainable programs require responsible management.

However, flexibility must be balanced with fairness.

As a professional licensed by the Commissioner for the State of Maryland, I work closely with families across income levels and maintain a clear understanding of how policy decisions affect households living below the poverty line as well as working-class families striving to remain financially stable. Too often, policy unintentionally creates a pressure point where those just above eligibility thresholds carry the greatest burden.

We must be careful not to solve one funding challenge by shifting new costs onto the middle class — families who already face rising housing, childcare, transportation, and healthcare expenses. These are hardworking Marylanders who do not qualify for assistance yet do not have unlimited flexibility in their household budgets.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future positioned College and Career Readiness pathways as equalizers. If access begins to depend on a family's ability to absorb additional fees, we risk creating a quiet barrier that discourages participation among students who would benefit most.

The amendments I respectfully recommend ensure that equity remains central while allowing counties operational flexibility: establishing sliding-scale affordability rather than unrestricted fee authority; ensuring statewide consistency so opportunity does not vary by county wealth; providing hardship protections for families experiencing temporary financial disruption; and requiring transparency and reporting so policymakers can measure outcomes fairly.

CCR pathways are not optional enhancements. They are workforce development tools, economic mobility pathways, and long-term investments in Maryland's competitiveness.

We must expand opportunity without over-taxing or over-burdening the very middle-class families who sustain our communities.

With thoughtful amendments that preserve access while supporting fiscal responsibility, Senate Bill 343 moves Maryland forward.

I respectfully request a favorable report with amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable, Dr. Cashenna A. Cross

Councilwoman-at-Large, City of Glenarden

Municipal Advocate

■ 571-719-8784

MD SB 343 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin McHenry

Position: UNF



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.

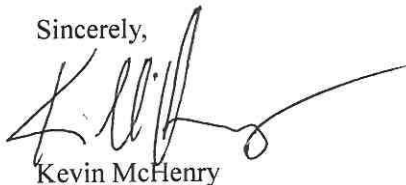
For these reasons, we respectfully urge the General Assembly to maintain full public funding for AP coursework and exams under the Blueprint.

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

SB0343 (Cross filed with HB0029) - Google Docs.pdf

Uploaded by: Legislative Affairs-Committee

Position: UNF

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

SB 343 Education - County Boards of Education - Post College and Career Readiness

Pathways - Payment of Costs

Bill Hearing Date February 18th, 2026

Position: Opposed

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and other Members of the Education, Energy & Environment Committee,

The Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City (ASCBC) opposes SB 343, which would allow county boards to create income eligibility guidelines and payment plans for students who are taking Post-CCR programs, which currently must be offered to students free of cost.

While this program could help school districts have the funding to expand CCR programs by allowing them to raise more funds, it would do so at the expense of reducing access to them and widening disparities between wealthy and non-wealthy school districts.

The sponsor of this bill claimed that individuals over 400% of the federal poverty line could afford CCR programs, and therefore it would not limit access. Payment could still be a deterrent to families, particularly large middle-income families near the 400% cutoff. The cost of living in Baltimore, according to the Economic Policy Institute¹, is around 110,000\$ per year for a family of 4, and 400% of the Federal Poverty line is 128,600. For families near this cutoff – especially those facing high costs for housing, healthcare, or transportation – even modest fees could discourage participation.

¹ Family budget map. (n.d.). Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved February 12, 2026, from <https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/budget-map/>

Not only will limiting access to students be an issue, but also it could promote funding inequity between wealthy counties and un-wealthy counties. While districts can choose whether or not to enact this plan, school districts with a significantly higher amount of students above the threshold will have better funding for their schools, while districts with a much smaller amount of higher income students (such as Baltimore City), won't be able to raise funding by charging for CTE programs, and therefore will not have as much educational funding as school districts with higher income districts (such as Montgomery County).

Baltimore City Public schools students care about equity in educational access, which is one of the Issues ASCBC has included on our Issues Platform this year based on data collected from students. Based on recent data we collected from students, 90.4% of students claimed that having equitable resources in all schools was either a very widely held concern or a somewhat widely held concern. This bill, while it may help support CCR programs in certain districts, undermines educational equity as a whole. For all these reasons, ASCBC requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 343.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Benjamin H. Grimaldi

Legislative Affairs Director at ASCBC

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SB 343 - State Board & MSDE - LOI.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Donna Gunning

Position: INFO

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 343 - County Boards of Education - Post College and Career Readiness Pathways - Payment of Costs

DATE: February 18, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information regarding Senate Bill 343, which outlines financial responsibilities for Post-College and Career Readiness (Post-CCR) Pathways between the state and local county boards under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. By giving local boards the ability to limit Post-CCR funding for students whose families earn above 400% of the federal poverty level (\$132,000 for a family of 4), the bill seeks to prioritize resources for students with the greatest economic need.

Under SB343, the state provides a defined level of education funding, and any costs exceeding that amount would become the responsibility of local county boards. The bill permits county boards to develop income eligibility guidelines and procedures for covering costs associated with competitive college preparatory programs, including International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge, or Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Each local education agency (LEA) would be responsible for determining and implementing these guidelines.

While SB343 represents a shift from the current Blueprint model, which provides universal access to Post-College and Career Readiness (Post-CCR) Pathways for all students who meet the College and Career Readiness standard, MSDE recognizes the bill's intent to support the long-term sustainability of Post-CCR funding. The bill introduces additional local flexibility by allowing county boards to establish income eligibility guidelines and cost-sharing structures for certain advanced coursework opportunities.

Implementation of this approach raises considerations that may benefit from further discussion, including potential variability across local education agencies and the practical challenges associated with income determination, as most LEAs do not currently collect actual family income data. The Department believes that reform to Post-CCR Pathways could benefit from additional stakeholder engagement, and its team stands ready to support this community outreach. Consideration of how State guidance could support consistent implementation may help ensure continued alignment with the Blueprint's goals for college and career readiness.

For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.

SB 343_AIB_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Joy Schaefer

Position: INFO



BLUEPRINT FOR
Maryland's Future

Accountability &
Implementation Board

Chair
Isiah Leggett

Vice Chair
William E. Kirwan

Executive Director
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Board Members
Jennifer M. Lynch
Joseph Manko
Contina Quick-McQueen
Justin Robinson
Robin M. Werner

BILL: Senate Bill 343

TITLE: County Boards of Education - Post College and Career Readiness Pathways - Payment of Costs

SPONSOR: Senator King

HEARING DATE: February 18, 2026


COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: **Information**

The Accountability and Implementation Board for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (AIB) submits this **letter of information** for **Senate Bill 343 – County Boards of Education – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs**.

Senate Bill 343 would authorize local boards of education to develop and establish income eligibility guidelines for the payment of costs for post-college and career ready (CCR) pathways, including Advanced Placement courses specified by the College Board, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, and the Cambridge AICE Diploma Program, programs that allow students to earn an associates degree or at least 60 credits towards a bachelor's degree, and a robust set of recommended and approved career and technology programs. Further, the legislation requires students with family incomes below 400% federal poverty level be provided access to post-CCR pathway programs, at no cost to them or their parents.

The Blueprint law (Chapter 36 of 2021) requires each local board of education to provide all students who meet the CCR standard with access to these post-CCR pathways, at no cost to the student or their parents. This is aligned to the intent of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Commission) that there should be statewide uniformity in the way postsecondary courses taken during high school, and regular high school courses, are paid for. The current law is also aligned to the Commission's recommendation that such programs should be offered at no cost to the student or the student's parents, and without regard to ability to pay.



The AIB has submitted a bill this session (HB 490/SB 311 Education - The Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Revisions) that extends, to FY 2030, the AIB and State Board's authority to require a minimum number of dual enrollment courses that a Local Education Agency must offer. Additionally, while the AIB recognizes the financial constraints LEAs are facing at this time, the Board does not support efforts to constrain access to post-CCR pathways for students who have met the CCR standard.

We hope that you find this information helpful as you consider **SB 343**. If you would like more information, please contact Joy Schaefer, Government Relations Director at joy.schaefer@maryland.gov or (410) 991-7623.

BC - INFORMATIONAL_ SB343 (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Riya Gupta

Position: INFO



INFORMATIONAL: Senate Bill 343 – County Boards of Education – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 18th, 2026

The Blueprint Coalition, a coalition of more than 30 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Marylanders and co-led by Strong Schools Maryland and the Maryland Education Coalition, submits informational testimony on Senate Bill 343. The Coalition is committed to the full and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and offers the following context to support the Committee's consideration of this bill.

Senate Bill 343 authorizes county boards of education to develop income eligibility guidelines and procedures for covering costs associated with certain post-College and Career Readiness (post-CCR) pathways, while requiring that students from families earning below 400% of the federal poverty level retain access at no cost. The bill reflects an effort to balance statewide expectations with local fiscal flexibility and establishes an important protection for students with the greatest financial need.

The Blueprint's vision for post-CCR pathways is grounded in equity and universality. Current law guarantees that students who meet the CCR standard can access advanced academic, early college, dual enrollment, and high-quality career pathways based on readiness rather than family income or zip code. This universal access is a cornerstone of the Blueprint's strategy to close opportunity gaps and ensure that students meet college and career readiness benchmarks at equal rates across student groups.

SB343 preserves this commitment in part by ensuring that students below 400% of the federal poverty level continue to receive post-CCR opportunities at no cost. This provision is significant and aligns with the Blueprint's focus on protecting access for students most likely to face financial barriers. At the same time, the bill introduces local discretion over cost-sharing for other students, which represents a shift from a uniform statewide guarantee to a county-by-county approach.

As the Committee considers this bill, the Coalition encourages attention to how local variation may affect the Blueprint's equity goals. Differences in county fiscal capacity, eligibility guidelines, and implementation practices could result in uneven access to post-CCR pathways for students with similar academic readiness. Families just above the income threshold may face new financial considerations that influence participation decisions, potentially limiting access to rigorous coursework and early college opportunities that the Blueprint was designed to expand.

The Coalition recognizes that local flexibility can be valuable, particularly as school systems manage complex program costs and implementation challenges. At the same time, the Blueprint's success depends on maintaining clear statewide expectations that readiness, not local resources or family income, drives access to postsecondary preparation. Ensuring transparency, consistency, and ongoing evaluation will be essential if local flexibility is expanded.

The Blueprint Coalition offers this information to highlight both the strengths of SB343 and the considerations it raises for equitable implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We appreciate the Committee's leadership and thoughtful review of how this bill aligns with the long-term goals Maryland has set for its students.

For additional information, please contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org.

Additional signatory: Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, sharlimar douglass

BC - INFORMATIONAL_ SB343.pdf

Uploaded by: Riya Gupta

Position: INFO



INFORMATIONAL: Senate Bill 343 – County Boards of Education – Post College and Career Readiness Pathways – Payment of Costs

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 18th, 2026

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The Coalition recognizes that local flexibility can be valuable, particularly as school systems manage complex program costs and implementation challenges. At the same time, the Blueprint's success depends on maintaining clear statewide expectations that readiness, not local resources or family income, drives access to postsecondary preparation. Ensuring transparency, consistency, and ongoing evaluation will be essential if local flexibility is expanded.

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