



SUPPORT: House Bill 352

Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil Grants – Eligible Uses
House Ways and Means Committee

February 11th, 2026

The Blueprint Coalition is a coalition of more than 30 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Marylanders and is co-led by Strong Schools Maryland and the Maryland Education Coalition. The coalition is dedicated to the full implementation and funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and works to ensure that Maryland's public education system meets the needs of all students, particularly those most impacted by systemic inequities. **The Blueprint Coalition offers favorable testimony in support of House Bill 352.**

House Bill 352 is about preserving the integrity and intent of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future by maintaining flexibility for schools that serve students experiencing concentrated poverty. At the heart of the Blueprint is a recognition that students' needs vary by community, and that local school communities are best positioned to determine how resources can most effectively support their students. SB 289 protects that principle by eliminating a looming sunset that would unnecessarily restrict how concentration of poverty grant funds may be used.

Community schools are a cornerstone of the Blueprint's vision. These schools are designed to respond to the specific academic, social, emotional, and community needs of their students by aligning resources with lived realities. That work depends on flexibility. When school leaders, educators, families, and community partners collaborate to identify priorities, they must have the ability to invest in the supports and programs that make the greatest difference locally. Reverting to a more limited and prescriptive use of concentration of poverty funds would undermine that work and weaken the promise of community schools.

Under current law, concentration of poverty funds from the personnel and per pupil grants may be used through fiscal year 2027 to support the programs required under COMAR 13A.04. These programs represent the full scope of a well-rounded education, including English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, and the arts, which are core to student learning, engagement, and long-term success. Allowing this flexibility was a deliberate choice at the outset of Blueprint implementation, recognizing that schools serving high-need populations require the ability to invest across the full educational experience.

Allowing this authority to expire would force schools into artificial tradeoffs that do not reflect student needs. Community schools would lose the ability to sustain staffing, programming, and instructional supports that have already been built using these funds disrupting planning and runs counter to the Blueprint's emphasis on long-term, sustainable improvement.

Maryland cannot achieve a world-class education system if we undermine the tools that schools need to meet students where they are. House Bill 352 affirms trust in community schools, respects local expertise, and keeps the Blueprint aligned with its original promise.

For these reasons, the Blueprint Coalition urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 352.

Please contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.

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