

**March 15, 2021**  
**SB 965: Blueprint for Maryland's Future-Revisions**  
**Position: Favorable with Amendments**



Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Strong Schools Maryland has been a critical grassroots advocacy leader in the effort to develop and pass the Blueprint for Maryland's Future into law. As an organization--and statewide movement--founded in response to the Kirwan Commission's work, we are uniquely invested in the successful implementation of the Blueprint. Strong Schools Maryland, therefore, encourages the committee to support Senate Bill 965: Blueprint for Maryland's Future-Revisions, with the following amendments:

- Remove the delay in developing methodology for accurately counting the number of students experiencing poverty in individual schools. This has critical implications for communities with large numbers of undocumented and/or mixed status families, whose schools are already severely underfunded.
- Fully fund the Concentration of Poverty personnel grants at the \$257,100 level in 2020's HB1300 (the Blueprint) rather than reducing the grant to students serving communities experiencing high concentrations of poverty to \$248,333.
- Remove the standardized testing requirement for students receiving transitional supplemental instruction (TSI) as all students will receive standardized testing in the fall and testing struggling students does not serve them. Diagnostic and growth-focused assessments which are administered as a part of a student's education plan do not meet our definition of standardized testing.
- The fiscal trigger provision outlined on page 30, lines 20-30, must clarify either that this assessment is conducted annually within a specific timeframe, or clarify what conditions will allow per pupil formula increases to resume full administration.
- This bill is an opportunity to clarify reporting mechanisms, formats, and timeframes for either the state department of education or local education agencies' use of federal funds for summer learning and student behavioral health, we encourage the body to consider augmenting this language to include reporting by poverty level, race/ethnicity, years of experience in a school, etc.

Strong Schools Maryland believes the above amendments will strengthen the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and urges the committee to report favorably with the above amendments on SB830.

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