



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 1027: Primary and Secondary Schools - Alternative School Options (Right to Learn Act)**

Ways and Means Committee

Position: Unfavorable

February 21, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which calls for an equitable investment into the Maryland education system. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in strong opposition to House Bill 1027**, which mandates public funding for scholarships for students to attend private schools.

Despite commitments made to Maryland students through the codification of Chapter 36 and innovative funding approaches by the General Assembly and Administration, the future of the Blueprint Fund is currently in jeopardy. This committee must once again hold the line to ensure the Blueprint is implemented with fidelity while allocating funding sufficient for the out-year provisions of the law. HB1027 is a step backwards.

House Bill 1027:

- Labels schools that have received one star under the Star rating system for 3 consecutive years as "failing schools" in a manner that is not recommended or utilized by the State's lead education agency, MSDE;
- Retaliates against schools labeled as "failing schools" instead of utilizing school-based supports and collaborative approaches like Expert Review Teams for school improvement;
- Requires school systems to provide information about military schools to families if a student is "violent" or "receives continuous disciplinary action" instead of addressing behavior issues by promoting a positive school climate, which is associated with fewer incidents of aggression, bullying, and violence¹; and
- Further allocates and expands eligibility of the BOOST program that unnecessarily puts public dollars behind private institutions.

In passing the Blueprint, the General Assembly made a promise to future generations: that their public schools would be fully funded and among the best in the world. Full funding of the Blueprint is key to achieving this goal. We urge this committee to use the Legislative Session to focus its attention on innovative strategies to fund the Blueprint—like the Fair Share Maryland Act (HB 1007) and reject irresponsible efforts to distract the body from its generational commitment.

For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 1027.

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

¹ [US Department of Education. 2023](#)