

STRONG SCHOOLS MARYLAND

2023

POST SESSION REPORT



hello@strongschoolsmaryland.org
www.strongschoolsmaryland.org

800 N Charles St. • Suite 400
Baltimore, MD • 21201

A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In some ways, the 2023 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session was one for the history books; our state's first law making period with Governor Wes Moore, Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, and Comptroller Brooke Lierman in leadership. Their commitment to our state's collective future is evident in the budgetary and policy decisions they worked with House Speaker Adrienne Jones and Senate President Bill Ferguson to bring about this year. If nothing else, the \$900 million they allocated to the Blueprint Fund this year is an explicit commitment to our collective future.

I am incredibly proud of our policy team's contributions to the activities of this Session, as well as the strength of our Teams of 10 network in Annapolis. However, the 2023 Session left a lot of good work undone: the Blueprint is not yet fully funded; community schools still require support and implementation guidance; the mental and behavioral health needs of students and school communities continue to grow as economic and other external hardships loom ahead. Here, we celebrate our successes and remember that we still have work to do.

- SHAMOYIA GARDINER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A NOTE FROM OUR POLICY FELLOWS



As new advocates, and particularly, new education advocates, we went into this Legislative Session believing there was no better time to be in the Maryland education world.

With a new Governor committed to ending child poverty and the start of implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Strong Schools Maryland's legislative priorities were set up for great success. While Session 2023 certainly had its bright spots, like House leaders championing education in the Budget and multiple initiatives to address student mental health, it also had disappointing lows, like democratic leadership arguing against the ideology of public funds for public good. One thing is for certain: our work is not over.

This Session, we have heard the Blueprint used in a variety of ways: from "revolutionary" to a "trigger word." It's used as an inspiring reference of model legislation, and as a weapon thrown in the face to dispel any argument for improving public education ever again. Now more than ever, it is crucial to ensure the Blueprint is implemented with fidelity. We must shift the narrative from a theoretical concept to a thriving practice. We must see our past, current, and future investments through, not just for proof of successful legislation, but for the kids, families, and communities it was promised to.

World class schools are on their way, but we have to be diligent enough to get there. Onwards and upwards to Session 2024!

- MADDIE LONG & RIYA GUPTA, POLICY FELLOWS

BILLS

**A RUNDOWN OF THE NUMBERS FOR THE
2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
HOUSE BILLS (1301) +
SENATE BILLS (974)
= TOTAL BILLS INTRODUCED 2275**

**# BILLS SSMD TRACKED - 196
• (TRACKING 9% OF BILLS THIS SESSION)**

BILLS SSMD TESTIFIED ON - 44

- 9 OPPOSE
- 1 INFORMATIONAL
- 2 SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
- 32 SUPPORT

TOTAL BILLS PASSED - 810

SSMD BILLS SUPPORTED & PASSED 15

- 44% OF BILLS WE SUPPORTED (OR SUPPORTED WITH AMENDMENTS) PASSED

**NOTE: NONE OF THE BILLS THAT SSMD
OPPOSED PASSED**



BIG WINS!

BILLS WE SUPPORTED & PASSED!

BLUEPRINT FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

HB 200: Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2024)

- **Sponsored by:** Speaker Adrienne Jones
- **Final Vote:** House (129-4), Senate (47-0)
- This year, the budget kicked off in a great position. Governor Moore allocated \$500 million of the State surplus to the Blueprint Fund, which the House of Delegates exceeded by additional \$400 million, for a total of \$900 million. The Senate attempted to cut funding by \$100 million, but thanks to the joint advocacy of Strong Schools Maryland's statewide network of Teams of Ten and partners in the Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, as well as the steadfast commitment of House leadership, the Blueprint Fund will receive a \$900 million infusion.
- Finally, a heated debate stalled budget negotiations: Senate leadership wanted to restore private school scholarship funding (through the BOOST program) that the Governor sought to phase out. Strong Schools Maryland stood in staunch opposition because public funds should be used for public good. The two chambers eventually came to a compromise by reducing Governor Moore's cuts by \$1 million.

HB 200:

- Provides State support for public schools to total \$8.7 billion, with \$660.7 million in direct aid to local school systems.
- Infuses the Blueprint fund with a \$900 million investment.
- Allocates \$2 million for the salaries of Blueprint Implementation Coordinators.



HB 770 - Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Various Policies and Prekindergarten Enrollment and Funding - Alterations

- **Sponsored by:** Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary (by Request of the Accountability and Implementation Board)
- **Final Vote:** House (120-10), Senate (46-0)
- Originally put forth by the AIB, HB 770 fixes an oversight in the Blueprint and makes technical changes for eligibility and counting of children for publicly funded prekindergarten in the State. This better aligns with the intent of the Blueprint to provide an equitable rollout of PreK and prioritize homeless youth, children with disabilities, and children from homes where English is not the primary spoken language. The bill also makes various other changes to the Blueprint.

HB 770:

- Adds “homeless youth” to the definition of “Tier I child” in law.
- Considers children with disabilities and children from homes in which English is not the primarily-spoken language as Tier I students for the 2023-2024 school year.
- Adds a school counselor member to the Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports.
- Makes changes to the assistant principal career ladder to improve the position requirements and responsibilities.
- Adjusts the requirements for the State alternative eligibility form for schools that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's community eligibility provisions to ensure accessibility, choice, and input from local school systems.
- Eliminates certain hurdles for prekindergarten providers.



HB320 – Maryland Longitudinal Data System - Definition of Student Data - Alteration

- **Sponsored by:** Delegates Michele Guyton and Anne Kaiser
- **Final Vote:** House (127-5), Senate (33-0)
- House Bill 320 alters the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) to include the collection of student disability data disaggregated by specific disability category. This closes a lacking gap in data collection for students with disabilities and will generate more accurate student information to advise stakeholders and decision makers, especially when it comes to providing supports and services through the Blueprint's Fourth Pillar.

HB 495/SB 350: Early Childhood Development - Child Care Scholarship Program - Alterations

- **Sponsored by:** Delegate Jared Solomon and Senator Nancy King
- **Final Vote:** House (136-1), Senate (47-0)
- This bill protects the State's Child Care Scholarship Program by codifying the circumstances in which it can be frozen and ensures that the Program copay levels do not increase and income eligibility does not decrease, unless specific steps are taken by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). This holds MSDE accountable to the Legislature and keeps child care affordable for families.

SB 551 - Department of Service and Civic Innovation and Maryland Corps Program Service Year Option Pathways - Established (Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)

- **Sponsored by:** Senate President Bill Ferguson (by Request of the Moore Administration)
- **Final Vote:** Senate (39-8), House (117-21)
- In response to his priorities of filling State employee vacancies and expanding opportunities for recent high school graduates, Governor Moore put forth Senate Bill 551, which establishes the Department of Service and Civic Innovation in the State of Maryland and alters the existing Maryland Corps program for more service options. This addresses short- and long-term state challenges of recruitment and retention, especially in high-needs areas like education, and grants access to professional development, mentoring, networking, and job training opportunities for program participants.

HB 1219 – Maryland Educator Shortage Reduction Act of 2023

- **Sponsored by:** Speaker Jones (by Request of the Moore Administration)
- **Final Vote:** House (132-6), Senate (43-0)
- HB 1219 supports the vision of the Blueprint's second pillar through setting targets for the recruitment and retention of teachers in teacher preparation programs. It also expands opportunities and removes barriers to confront the shortage of educators and the inadequate pipeline to supply Maryland teachers, including prekindergarten teachers and school-based mental health professionals.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS & STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

SB 582 – Behavioral Health Care - Treatment and Access (Behavioral Health Model for Maryland)

- **Sponsored by:** Senator Malcolm Augustine
- **Final Vote:** Senate (45-0), House (137-2)
- This bill aligns with the Blueprint's vision of investments to pre-emptively and responsively address community behavioral and mental health needs through establishing a Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access and piloting multiple initiatives to study and improve behavioral healthcare and telehealth.

SAFE LEARNING

ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL

SB 582 – Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers - Corporal Punishment - Prohibition

- **Sponsored by:** Delegate Eric Ebersole
- **Final Vote:** House (135-5), Senate (36-7)
- The Blueprint's vision of equitable practices and student outcomes is incompatible with harmful disciplinary practices anywhere, least of all in child care facilities. HB 185 requires the Maryland State Department of Education and the State Board to actively address corporal punishment by withholding approval and licensure for nonpublic schools and small and large child care providers unless they have a specific policy prohibiting corporal punishment.

LOCAL BILLS

NOTE: STRONG SCHOOLS MARYLAND DOES NOT PROVIDE TESTIMONY ON LOCAL BILLS; HOWEVER, WE DO SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE BILLS WITH OUR TEAMS OF TEN NETWORK AND PROVIDE RESOURCES & SUPPORT FOR TEAM LEADERS AND MEMBERS WHO WISH TO TESTIFY FOR OR AGAINST LOCAL BILLS.

Anne Arundel County

HB 492: Anne Arundel County - School Vehicles - Duration of Operation

Changed the number of years that a school vehicle may be operated in Anne Arundel County from 12 years to 15 years.

Baltimore City

HB 153/SB 31: Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners - Student Members and Task Force to Study Compensation and Student Members

This bill establishes how a student member of the Board of School Commissioners is elected by students, alters the voting rights of students to include collective bargaining matters, and establishes a task force to study compensation for student members.

Baltimore County

HB 175: Baltimore County Board of Education - Student Member - Voting and Training

HB 175 authorizes the student member of the Baltimore County Board of Education to vote on capital and operating budget matters and ensures that the proper budget training is developed and administered to the student member.

HB 210: Baltimore County - Board of Education - Member Elections and Appointments

This bill staggers the election and appointment of members of the Baltimore County Board of Education.

HB 348: Baltimore County - School Board Nominating Commission - Vacancy Procedures

This bill put measures in place to fill a vacancy on the Baltimore County School Board and increases transparency and community engagement opportunities if a vacancy occurs.

Charles County

SB 491: Charles County - Task Force to Study School Bus Operator Contracts and Wages

This bill establishes a task force to study school bus operator contracts and wages in Charles County, as well as student transportation best practices.

Kent County

HB 402/SB 402: Kent County - Board of Education - Student Member

This bill adds a student member to the Kent County Board of Education.

Prince George's County

HB 437: Prince George's County Public Schools - Alterations to Title of Chief Executive Officer and Establishment of Office of Integrity and Compliance PG 501-23

This bill changes the title of the Chief Executive Officer of the Prince George's County public school system to the County Superintendent of the Prince George's County public school system, and it establishes a the Office of Integrity and Compliance in the Prince George's County public school system to evaluate, examine, investigate, report on, and make recommendations to the school system.

HB 1079: Prince George's County - Board of Education and School System Revisions PG 502-23

HB 1079 makes various alterations to the Prince George's County School Board, including the voting authority, election, and campaign funding of a student member.

Talbot County

HB 656/SB302: Talbot County - Board of Education - Election of Officers

This bill makes a change to the timing of elections of the president and vice president to the end of the year.



LOOKING AHEAD

THE WORK OF ENSURING WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS CONTINUES...

Even during the most dramatic transition in Maryland since 2014, Strong Schools Maryland and our coalition partners across Maryland were able to support big wins in the immediate-term and scaffold future victories for Maryland students, families, educators, and small businesses. As ever, much more work remains to be done. Here are some bills that didn't pass in the 2023 Session. Stay connected with us as we continue to advocate in future legislative sessions to create equitable, supportive schools for every student in Maryland:

BLUEPRINT FUNDING + IMPLEMENTATION

- HB 46, HB 191, and HB 337 - all would have closed financial loopholes that large corporations exploit and provide funding support for a variety of initiatives, including the Blueprint.
- HB 1196 would have altered Blueprint funding formulas to help specific local school systems, mandated funding for the salary and benefits of Blueprint Implementation Coordinators, and shifted reporting requirements for Blueprint implementation evaluation to better align with current timelines.

STUDENT ENFRANCHISEMENT

- HB 568 would have protected student voice by preventing schools from punishing students who attend/organize peaceful student-led demonstrations.
- HB 576 would have improved bullying and harassment policies in school, shortening parent notification time while maintaining student privacy.
- HB 878 would have designated space and allowed middle and high school students to take telehealth appointments in school.

SCHOOL SAFETY

- HB 1114 would have closed a discriminatory loophole in Maryland education law that criminalizes students through vague language.
- SB 811 would have required the state department of education to make available and disaggregate by race and disability status, punitive student discipline data. This is the fifth session this bill has failed; one of the recommendations of the Commission on the School to Prison Pipeline & Restorative Practices.
- HB 375 would have required coaches of public school sports to be trained in mental health first aid.

GET INVOLVED

HELP US CREATE A FUTURE WHERE EVERY MARYLAND FAMILY REALIZES THE DREAM OF - AND OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY - WORLD CLASS SCHOOLS!

ONLINE

- strongschoolsmaryland.org
- facebook.com/strongschoolsmaryland
- twitter.com/strongschoolsmd
- instagram.com/strongschoolsmd

(or scan these codes with your smartphone's camera)



JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST



START OR JOIN A TEAM OF TEN



DONATE



OUR TEAM



SHAMOIA GARDINER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



MAYA BOND
LOCAL ORGANIZER



DAVE HEILKER
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST



RIYA GUPTA
POLICY RESEARCH FELLOW



MADDIE LONG
POLICY ANALYST FELLOW



JAMAL TURNER
TEAMS OF 10 ORGANIZER



STRONG SCHOOLS MARYLAND

ALL CONTENT AND MATERIALS HEREIN ARE COPYRIGHT © 2023 STRONG SCHOOLS MARYLAND, EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE INDICATED.

LICENSE FOR THE REPRODUCTION AND USE OF THESE MATERIALS UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-NONCOMMERCIAL-SHAREALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)



www.strongschoolsmaryland.org