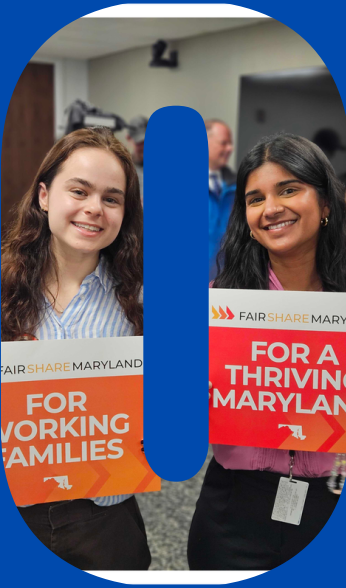




END OF SESSION REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The 2024 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session was a quietly historic one for the Network. This year was the first year Strong Schools Maryland wrote and advanced legislation responsive to the implementation context of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Our small but mighty team values lifelong learning and the policy team took it to heart as they approached this year's challenges with all the openness and creativity a leader could hope for. I am so incredibly proud of their efforts and successes this year, knowing they've set a high standard for our ongoing and future efforts to secure educational equity through policy.

Our work is far from complete, however. We faced surprising resistance from many legislative leaders as we fought to advance policy to generate new revenue, at a time when multi-billion dollar deficits are looming over all future state budget projections. Despite those disappointments, we found ourselves buoyed by coalition partners within our Network, whose value alignment and creative approaches to advocacy remind us that we're far from alone.

As you read this recounting of the past winter, we hope you remember the same thing.

For the future🔥,
Shamoyia Gardiner



“Those of us who can, must do more for our children.”
-Dr. Alvin Thornton
Chair, Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence

OUR REFLECTIONS

My experience working with the Policy Team during Session 2024 has been incredibly enlightening. As someone new to the field and joining the team right before the start of the Legislative Session, I can confidently say that although I jumped in two feet first, nothing could have prepared me for the journey that lay ahead. While learning the ins and outs of Annapolis with Riya expertly guiding me through the hallways of our State Legislature, I was continuously struck by the profound impact individuals can have when they unite behind a common goal.

Throughout Session, we, meaning Strong Schools Maryland, our amazing network, and countless other advocacy groups and community members, tackled issues ranging from revenue generation through tax reform to addressing the basic needs of our students through strengthening our community schools. What stood out to me the most was the power of collective action. I remember speaking with other people testifying on the same bills as we waited outside of the committee rooms. Our conversations, coming from different organizations, backgrounds, and counties, exemplified the fact that **everybody** has a stake in public education. Although the decisions made by legislators when the clock ticks down to the end of Session do not always reflect this truth, the people have the power to hold them accountable.

It has been a joy to work with the Policy Team, Strong Schools Maryland, and every advocate for World-Class public schools this Session. There is much to do as there is so much to fight for, and I look forward to the Interim and Session 2025 to continue the work!

For the future💙,
Kenzie Funk,
Policy Associate



As this was my first real active Legislative Session as an advocate, one thing I learned is there is so much you don't learn about the legislative process in your history or civics class in high school. I came in hopeful and ready to make waves in the education landscape, with a bill already prefiled and our legislator priority grounded in the needs of communities we touched during our 2023 Tour for Maryland's Future. I quickly learned that making those waves is not a one person job, not a one organization job, it requires a collective statewide call for action and change.

One of the most beautiful parts of Session was the collective action we were able to take together from working on amendment language for our priority legislation with state agencies like the AIB and MSDE, to chanting for full funding of the Blueprint in front of the State House, to sending hundreds of emails to legislators demanding they pass the Fair Share for Maryland Plan. It can be (and it was) frustrating advocating for policy through the legislative process, but it is clear, now more than ever, that advocacy can make change. WE, together, can co-create an education system that is equitable and World Class, if we take collective action. A lot of what we achieved this session was because of that collective action – whether it be passing our Community Schools Alterations bill or starting important conversations about tax justice and reform.

I am so proud of the work of our team, our network, and all our new friends who joined in the fight for World Class Schools for all Maryland students. Let's keep this momentum, take collective action, and make transformative change.

For the future🌟,
Riya Gupta,
Policy Researcher



2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

FUND the future

FORTIFY the future

FACE the future

4

the future



FUND THE FUTURE

Dedicate financial resources through available funding surpluses and revenue generation to create sustained, equitable investment in public school communities to fulfill the promise of the Blueprint.



FORTIFY THE FUTURE

Strengthen supports that meet the basic needs of students including no-cost housing, no-cost nutritious meals, and high-quality Community Schools that follow evidence-based best practices.



FACE THE FUTURE

Engage, educate, and communicate with impacted students and school communities throughout decision and policy-making processes.

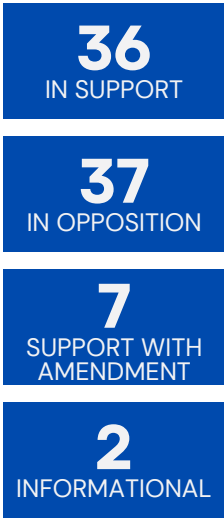
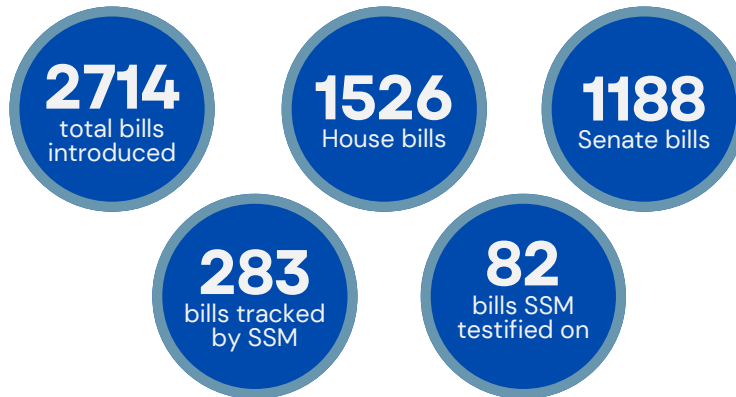


4 THE FUTURE

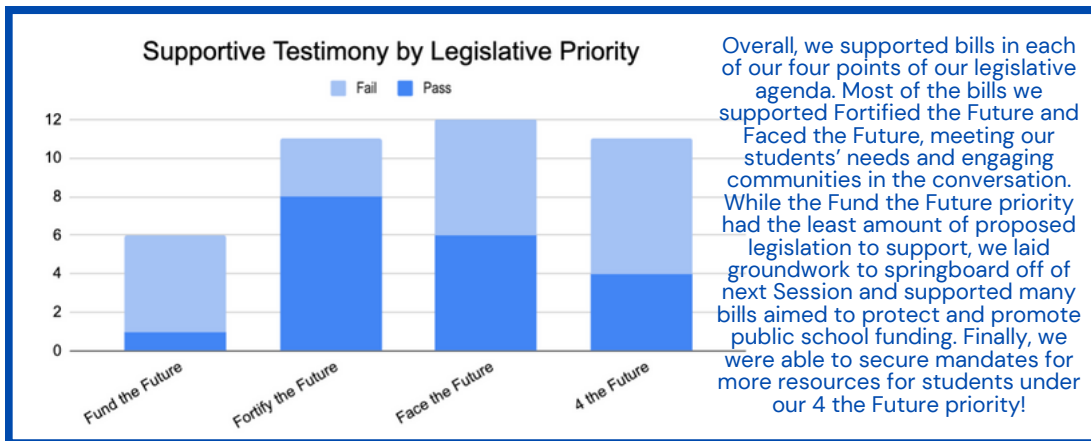
Prioritize building an education system that is rich with high-quality opportunities and resources for every student to succeed and determine their futures.

BILLS BILLS BILLS

RUNNING THE SESSION STATS



BREAKING DOWN WHAT WE SUPPORTED



Of the 39 bills SSM supported or supported with amendments, 49% (19) of the bills passed through the legislature (excluding the must-pass Budget and BRFA bill).

NONE of the 37 bills that SSM opposed successfully crossed over or passed through the legislature.

FUND THE FUTURE

'Emoji' Key
 ★ Priority Legislation
 ✓ Passed
 ✗ Did not Pass

DID NOT PASS

★ ✗ **HB1007 / SB766: Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2024**
Sponsor: Delegates Palakovich Carr and Senators Hettleman

Fair Share for MD Act of 2024, one of our priority bills, aimed to generate \$1.7 billion annually by closing corporate loopholes and taxing MD's top 1.5% of earners, while providing much needed tax relief for more than 1 million Marylanders. While this version of the bill did not pass this session, it created much-needed conversation in communities and amongst legislators about tax justice and reform as well as revenue generation - this conversation will continue into the Interim.



233 people told their legislators to pass the Fair Share for MD Act!

We hosted our Power Hour🔥 series where people could complete different actions ranging from our video campaign to phone banking to share why equitable revenue generation matters!



[Click here to watch our video campaign!](#)

**Senate (33-11)
House (90-35)**

✓ **SB362: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2024**
Sponsor: The President (By Request - Administration)

Due to strong advocacy, the House Appropriations Committee incorporated aspects of the Fair Share for MD Act into the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (a must-pass companion bill to the state budget bill) to promote revenue generation including worldwide combined reporting provisions. While those amendments were struck during Conference Committee, we did see some extra revenue commitment to the Blueprint through an increase in the tobacco tax.

<p>✓ HB1426 / SB1102: Education - Blueprint for Maryland's Future - Alterations</p>	<p>This AIB-requested bill makes necessary technical changes to the Blueprint law including to early childhood education and to CCR pathways based on funding mechanism issues</p>
<p>✓ HB1082: Blueprint for Maryland's Future Implementation - Funding for Implementation Coordinators</p>	<p>This bill mandates funding for the salary and benefits of Blueprint Implementation Coordinators, and shifts reporting requirements for Blueprint implementation evaluation to better align with current timelines.</p>
<p>✗ HB789 / SB545: Primary and Secondary Education - Public School Employees - Salaries</p>	<p>This bill would have invested in our public school employees by extending Blueprint salary increases to certificated staff providing direct instruction beyond teachers, recognizing their credentials.</p>

FORTIFY THE FUTURE

'Emoji' Key
★ Priority Legislation
✔ Passed
✘ Did not Pass

Senate (45-0)
House (135-0)

★✔ HB200 / ✔ SB161: Community Schools - Alterations

Sponsor: Delegate Wilkins and Senator A. Washington

The Community Schools – Alterations bill, our other priority bill, is history for our organization as it is the FIRST time Strong Schools Maryland has been a partner of a bill from the inception. This bill strengthens language around community school implementation including how Concentration of Poverty funds can be utilized and MSDE and the AIB’s role in evaluation. This bill was a learning experience in terms of the legislative process and we are thankful for our partners including Community School Coordinators who shared their meaningful experiences.



72 people told their legislators to strengthen their community schools through our email campaign!



Senate (45-0)
House (135-0)

✔ HB522 / SB492: Public Schools - Student Telehealth Appointments - Policy and Access

Sponsor: Delegate D. Jones and Senator Kagan

This bill requires schools have a designated space, but does not require any new construction, allowing students to take telehealth appointments in school, preemptively and responsively addressing school community behavioral and mental health needs. After not successfully passing last Session, we are happy to see unanimous commitment to young people through the passage of this bill.

✔ HB183 / SB 213: Human Services – Food Supplement Program and Human Services Careers Scholarships – Alterations

This bill as passed makes technical and clarifying changes to the implementation of SNAP benefits for children better meeting needs of children and families. However, disappointingly, the increase in allocation for the SNAP benefits for children was amended out.

HB696 / ✔ SB579: Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion Report

This bill as passed requires a study to be conducted on the cost for providing free breakfast and lunch to all students in public schools. However, disappointingly, major amendments took out provisions that would make breakfast and lunch free for all students in public school.

✔ HB386 / ✔ SB425: Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program – Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)

This bill provides funding to create more in-classroom breakfast available to all students allowing schools to be more flexible in order to better meet the basic needs of their students.

FACE THE FUTURE

'Emoji' Key
 ★ Priority Legislation
 ✓ Passed
 ✗ Did not Pass

Senate (47-0)
 House (140-0)

✓ **HB1115 / SB1026: County Boards of Education - Budgets - Notice (Transparency in Education Spending Act)**

This bill requires that the State Board of Education develop and adopt a process to provide county boards of education budget information to local governments in an organized and timely manner. Furthermore, this bill then mandates that the county board post this budget information on their website, making it easily accessible the public, streamlining the budget process and increasing transparency for community engagement.

DID NOT PASS

✗ **HB456 / SB386: County Boards of Education - Student members - Voting Rights and Participation in Executive Sessions**

This piece of proposed legislation would have mandated that student members of the local boards of education obtain voting rights on certain manners. Although this bill did not pass, the Policy Team appreciated the work done by sponsors to advocate for legitimate student engagement in important decision-making processes and hope to continue this work next Session.

✓ HB291 / ✓ SB170: County Boards of Education - Bid Advertisement Threshold and Electronic Posting of Hearing Notices and Bid Advertisements

This bill mandates transparency in bid advertisements related to school improvement projects exceeding a specific amount by requiring the posting of this information on the local school system website.

✓ HB903 / SB797: Education - Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education Program and Fund - Established

This bill empowers students in special education by requiring that certain information in regard to programming and access to attorneys, advocates, and consultants be provided to their families.

✗ HB890: Public Schools - Discipline-Related Data - Collection and Publication

This bill would have required that the State Department of Education provide specific discipline related data in spreadsheet format on their website.

✗ HB1400 / SB1032: Public Schools - Student Use of Force - Authorization

This bill would have authorized students to take action and use reasonable force to prevent violence on school premises.

✗ HB951: County Boards of Education - Voter Registration Link - Posting Requirement

This bill would have required that county Boards of Education publish the voter registration link on the main page of their website.

4 THE FUTURE

'Emoji' Key
 ★ Priority Legislation
 ✓ Passed
 ✗ Did not Pass

Senate (47-0)
House (137-0)

✓ **HB75 / SB377: Higher Education - Teacher Development and Retention Program - Alterations**

This bill supports Pillar 2 of the Blueprint, High Quality and Diverse Teachers and Leaders, and mandates more resources for all students by expanding institutional eligibility for the Teacher Development and Retention Program to include community colleges! The Policy Team is excited to see this bill pass as it aims to increase the diversity of our teacher workforce, increase accessibility for students to become teachers, and encourage/develop our future leaders in education.

DID NOT PASS

✗ **HB473 / SB637: Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

This bill aimed to expand access to out of state tuition exemption for undocumented students by reducing the number of years that they or their guardian must file their taxes before the academic year to qualify. This bill would make filing for this exemption more accessible for our students. Strong Schools Maryland supported CASA in championing this bill and aims to continue the work to support the needs of undocumented students next Session.

<p>✓ HB336 / ✓ SB592: Maryland Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Program - Materials for Individualized Education Program, Individualized Family Service Plan, and 504 Plan Meetings</p>	<p>This bill provides more resources for students with IEPs, 504 plans, or individualized programming by mandating that a local school system provide parents with information regarding the ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) program.</p>
<p>✗ HB1326: Primary and Secondary Education - Teachers - Retention and Support Policies, Guidelines, and Training</p>	<p>This bill would have required that every county board of education adopt a teacher retention policy that meets the guidelines developed by the State Board of Education <i>and</i> a school leadership training program developed by the AIB and State Department of Education.</p>
<p>✗ SB5: Higher Education - University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland - Guaranteed Admissions</p>	<p>This bill would have mandated that the schools listed admit all applicants from Maryland public schools who are in the top 10% of their class.</p>
<p>✗ SB61: Higher Education - Disciplinary Records - Use in Admissions and Disciplinary Proceedings</p>	<p>This bill would have prohibited institutions of higher education from asking applicants about their disciplinary records, expanding opportunities for students.</p>
<p>✗ HB615 / SB512: Education - Prohibited Behavior on School Grounds and Property - Application</p>	<p>This bill would have specified that certain provisions of the law that penalize disruptive and threatening behavior on school grounds do not apply to students.</p>

DEFENDING OUR PRIORITIES

ALL the bills the Strong Schools Maryland team opposed died before Crossover. Here are a few bills we opposed:



HB1432 / SB1062: Education - Prekindergarten and Withholding County Board Funding (Blueprint Accountability and Flexibility Act of 2024)

This bill would have altered Blueprint law and implementation timelines and enforce financial punitive actions of school systems.



HB18: Education - Reporting Arrests of Students - Alterations

This bill would have expanded reporting of reportable offenses and release confidential student information to the Maryland Center for School Safety and the State Board.



HB1430: Education - Public Schools - Parents' Rights (Education Bill of Rights for Families Act)

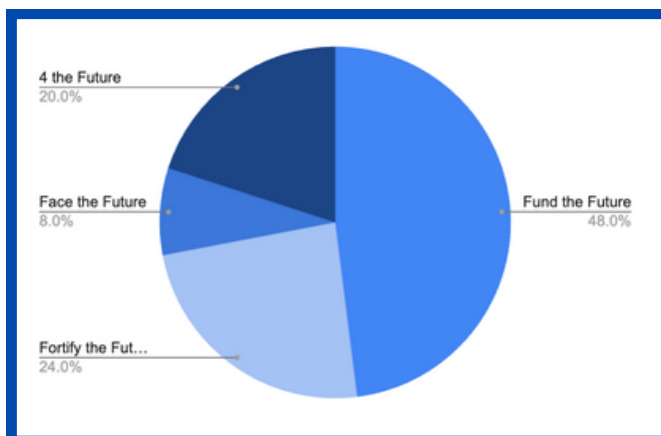
This bill would have granted the parents of public school students certain increased oversight regarding information and communication from the local schools.



HB82: Post College and Career Readiness Pathways - Cost to Student - Alteration

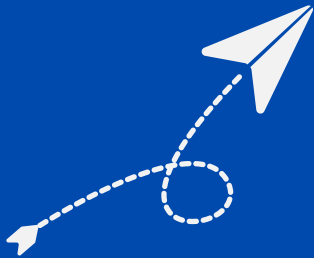
This bill would have repelled the requirement that a county board of education provide career readiness (CCR) pathways at no cost to students who meet the CCR standard - an important provision of the Blueprint.

Overall, this Session we saw a massive attack on educational equity, funding, and the Blueprint - these attacks were often times disguised and came in methods that were both familiar and new to the SSM team. One major theme of the bills we opposed were almost half aimed to alter the funding of public schools whether it be through the increasing allocation for private school vouchers or altering the education funding formula. This comes as no surprise as misinformation about education funding and the Blueprint are on the rise. While we successfully opposed 37 bills, we also hosted Blueprint Budget Workshops across the State to educate communities about the Blueprint and provide funding solutions .



LOOKING AHEAD

As the work continues, here are some ways that you can get involved!



SEND A MESSAGE TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

to thank them for their advocacy this Session or share with them what you want them to focus on during the Interim and next Session

[Send your message!](#)



SIGN UP FOR UPDATES

to receive our email newsletters and more information about our upcoming summer tour!

[Click here or scan for updates!](#)



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to support Strong Schools Maryland

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With that, a big thanks to our Strong Schools Maryland Network for being a part of our 2024 Legislative Session. Stay in touch!

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