

Linton Springs Elementary PTA



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375 Ronsdale Road
Sykesville, Maryland 21784

March 22, 2023

Subject: Blueprint Implementation

Dear Senators of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

We write as concerned parents on behalf of families at Linton Springs Elementary School in Carroll County. While Blueprint objectives may prove successful for student outcomes in the future, the initial months and years of implementation present daunting challenges to local education agencies (LEAs), especially with limited and restricted State funding. While our concerns may be premature, the local forecast is grim – the Superintendent and Board of Education in Carroll County are signaling they may need to transfer hundreds of teachers and that class sizes may increase up to 50-75 children per class, levels just shy of fire code restrictions. This is not what Blueprint was designed to accomplish.

While we are still in the early stages of implementation, there are some things the Senate and House of Delegates can do now to make the path towards implementation more manageable for LEAs. Please consider relaxing the restrictions currently in place on funds provided by the State. Specifically, we request that legislators consider removing the restriction that LEAs must spend 75% of allocated funds within that specific category of expense. Easing the timeline of the phase-in of the Blueprint could also give struggling LEAs more time to solve the challenges related to implementation. Alternatively, please consider revising funding formulas so that more State funds are allocated to LEAs under the Foundation funding category. Maryland has large county-wide school systems and each has unique challenges and strengths. Please allow each LEA to determine how best to manage its budget, including State funds, to meet Blueprint objectives. The focus should be on outcomes, not expense reports.

In the recently released Maryland Report Card, 70% of Carroll County schools were awarded 4 or 5 stars by the Maryland State Department of Education. Further, in the recently released Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) results, Carroll County students surpassed the Statewide average in all assessments: English and Language Arts Grade 3 - 8, Mathematics Grade 3 - 8, English 10 and Algebra I. Carroll County students were ranked in the top five of all LEAs in all assessment categories and impressively finished first or second in three of the four assessment tests. These achievements should be allowed to continue, and not be hindered by the funding restrictions present in Blueprint. We urge you to introduce, or support, legislation that would either provide waivers or hold harmless from funding consequences those LEAs who meet the State's criteria for success as evaluated under either the MCAP or the Maryland Report Cards.

We believe the time to act is during this legislative session. Failure to take helpful action during this session leaves LEAs to struggle for the next year as they strive to implement Blueprint. Please act during this legislative session to ease the restrictions described above and support LEAs as they implement Blueprint objectives.

Respectfully,

Linton Springs Elementary PTA