

**Office of Strategic Initiatives**

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**BLUEPRINT**  
for our students' future 

**Public Comment to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB)**

**May 11, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Leggett, Vice Chair Kirwan, and Board members. My name is Katie Ridgway, and I'm the Blueprint Coordinator for Harford County Public Schools. Thank you for allowing public comment at AIB meetings.

On April 14th, Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly released his proposed budget for FY24, whereby he is cutting 19 million dollars from our previous year's budget for the first time in our records dating back to 1988. In comments made to the Harford Business Roundtable for Education on May 2nd, Mr. Cassilly stated that our increase in state funding should go solely to teachers, which suggests that we ignore the law that is the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Calling the Blueprint an abomination, he shared his perspective that he filibustered the law to delay it a year.

It is significant that our local leader wants us to use our State Blueprint funding in a way that does not meet our requirements under the law and wants our community to believe that an increase in state funding is a blank check rather than funds allocated for specific, compulsory purposes such as expanding pre-kindergarten, free college and career ready pathways like free dual enrollment, necessary mental health and special education supports, and, in fact, paying our teachers more. By instructing us to misuse State funding, he is sabotaging our outcomes. Especially when considering that State funding can be withheld if we don't comply with the law.

Please help us communicate to local leaders that Blueprint funding cannot supplant local funding, that the Blueprint is law, and that State leaders will not stand for politics impeding the transformational Blueprint mandates prescribed by our State legislature. Please understand how local leaders can distort and add barriers to the work we are investing in to provide all 38,000 students in Harford County with an equitable experience to be competitive in a global society. **We are committed to the fundamental principles within the law and want all State education leaders, advocates, and state officials to be aware of our experience and speak up for our district.**

Thank you,



Katie Ridgway, *Director of Strategic Initiatives and Blueprint Coordinator*

**CLARIFICATION FROM Q&A:**