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BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE

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The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Accountability and Implementation Board Approves Carroll County Public Schools' Minimum School Funding Waiver Request

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) approved Carroll County Public Schools' Minimum School Funding (MSF) Requirements (Section 5-234) Waiver Request at the special public meeting held on Monday, April 28, 2025. After considering the evidence presented by Carroll County Public Schools in its written waiver request and its oral argument during the AIB Public Meeting on Thursday, April 17, 2025, as well as the written and oral public comment the AIB received from over 1,300 Carroll County constituents, the AIB granted the waiver request in this [decision](#) approved today.

"Carroll County is asking for more time to meet the requirement, not to remove the requirement altogether, and has provided valid reasoning for why they need more time to phase in these changes. We know that the Blueprint is not one size fits all, and we look forward to working with Carroll County Public Schools to support them in meeting the Minimum School Funding Requirements in Fiscal Year (FY) 2028," said AIB Chair Isiah "Ike" Leggett.

Carroll County Public Schools submitted its [waiver request](#) on April 1, 2025, and provided additional information requested by the AIB on April 11, 2025. The waiver was requested to prevent rapid staffing changes that would impact multiple schools. One key reason for the waiver request was the significant increase in the number of Compensatory Education students - those who qualify for free and reduced price meals - in the district from FY23 to FY24, specifically an 86.3% increase in Carroll County compared to a Statewide average increase of 33.6%. The district noted this shift had a sizable impact on the amount of resources it needed to address as it works to align with the Blueprint. Additionally, Carroll County Public Schools experienced over \$40 million in local budget cuts between FY09 and FY19, resulting in many positions being cut during that time. According to Carroll County Public Schools, by the time the Blueprint was launched in 2021, due to the preceding decade of budget and staffing cuts, it lacked the flexibility needed to

adjust staffing to align with Blueprint objectives. The district’s proposed FY26 budget would have eliminated, reduced, or moved close to 200 mostly school-based positions in a single year.

After carefully weighing the Blueprint goals and objectives against the reality of the challenges of implementation, the AIB approved the waiver request and gave Carroll County Public Schools through FY28 to be in full compliance with the requirement. The AIB found the increase in compensatory education students is significant and that changing the status of approximately 200 full-time equivalent positions in a single school year will likely create an environment that interferes with effective teaching and learning. The AIB also found that Carroll County has a thoughtful plan to fully comply with the MSF requirements in FY28. The waiver is consistent with the intent of the Blueprint because it provides a measured and reasonable approach to effective and productive implementation of its goals and objectives.

“The goal of minimum school funding in the Blueprint is to ensure targeted resources are provided to help close achievement gaps for various student populations. The funding will follow these students to their schools so they can receive the services they need to be successful,” said AIB Vice Chair William “Brit” Kirwan. “Given the significant change in the compensatory education population in Carroll County, granting the waiver will provide Carroll County Public Schools with a longer runway to make staffing changes and seek innovative solutions with technical assistance provided by the AIB, in order to ensure targeted education funds are reaching schools in the intended manner by the end of FY28.”

To ensure that Carroll County continues to work toward full compliance in FY28, the AIB included requirements that the district must meet. All requirements can be found in the [adopted decision](#); key ones include:

- Carroll County Public Schools must code all compensatory education and multilingual learner expenditures at the school level by February 1, 2026.
- Carroll County Public Schools will implement the plan it submitted as part of the waiver request, but it may amend the plan as needed, with prior written approval by the AIB.
- Carroll County Public Schools will provide written progress updates to the AIB at least every six months, including its work with APA, one of AIB’s technical assistance partners to support LEAs in allocating resources to meet the MSF requirements.

In May 2024, the AIB and Maryland State Board of Education adopted a joint policy, called Joint Implementation Policy #2, that created a phased-in approach for complying with minimum school funding requirements. Wherever a school system was in terms of compliance in the 2024-2025 school year, it had to close 50% of that remaining gap in the 2025-2026 year and then reach 100% compliance in the 2026-2027 school year. Without this flexibility, school systems would have had to reach full compliance before now.

For more information on the AIB and the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future implementation, please visit [the AIB website](#).

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