

About Strong Future Maryland

The [mission](#) of Strong Future Maryland (SFM) is to advance bold progressive change that will address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders. The organization was founded by former U.S. Education Secretary John B. King, Jr., who recently stepped down from the Strong Future Maryland board when he entered the Maryland gubernatorial race. Alice Wilkerson, a longtime legislative and policy expert, serves as Executive Director.

We have built a team of powerhouse advisors that bring to the organization a diversity of lived experiences that speak to our mission and represent the challenges of the communities that we are trying to support. This group includes students, educators, immigrants, labor and environmental leaders, civil rights leaders, disability rights activists, formerly incarcerated individuals turned youth advocates, and experts in juvenile justice reform, criminal justice reform, tax policy, and affordable housing.

Read more about our advisory council, staff, and board [here](#).

Strong Future Maryland is a 501(c)(4) organization. We do not engage in electoral activities.

Partnering with Strong Future Maryland

SFM is proud to partner with organizations, coalitions, and advocates who are working tirelessly to advance important policy measures for youth justice reform, workers' rights, an equitable economy, climate justice, and more. We seek values-aligned, strategic partnerships and we support multi-year strategies that prioritize authentic coalition-building and partnerships, policy victories, and implementation. Our goal as a partner is to champion your priorities and lend capacity to your campaign, avoiding any duplication of efforts and filling the gaps where you most need support. We understand that needs will differ depending on the community, issue, organization, and campaign, and will be unearthed by building authentic relationships.

Our Values

As a partner, SFM believes we should be “on tap, not on top.” We believe in building power to enable wins on the various issues communities most care about, over time, and redistributing that power to communities most impacted by issues. That includes participating in and promoting community-informed policymaking, and leveraging access to decision-makers in a way that transfers power to communities. We are always looking for ways to embody cooperative models rather than competitive models of collaboration.

How We Can Help

Below is an overview of the ways we *may* be able to show up in support of your efforts—whether you are in a very preliminary process of exploring policy goals that will help address issues unique to your community, in the building phase of an emerging campaign, or actively engaged in an established campaign.

Policy Development & Lobbying

SFM can provide lobbying support and partnership to organizations and advocates working to create meaningful progressive change but lacking capacity or experience in the legislative process. This might include, but is not limited to, civic engagement training, expert advice on strategy/political analysis, power-mapping decision-makers, policy development and bill drafting support, Lobby Day or bill hearing assistance, and direct lobbying support on an as-needed basis. We may also be able to share your action alerts with our robust email list.

Campaign Development

SFM is also happy to support you as you develop your campaign, serving as a sounding board and providing feedback on your campaign plan as requested. We are glad to leverage our relationships in service of your efforts and make connections with other groups who may be natural allies. We may have the capacity to collaborate on public events and/or promote community conversations that may inform your campaign. For instance, over the past year, we have been engaging in conversations with allied organizations and community leaders across the state to help us understand what they think is needed and will work in Maryland to close the achievement gaps. These events ranged from dialogues with educators and education advocates to discussions of policies and issues with community advocates and leaders on topics including affordable housing, youth justice, and climate change. [Here are a few videos](#) from those events.

Amplifying Your Messages

If your campaign needs help gaining traction, we want to lift up your messages and provide support in executing your communications strategy. For example, during the 2021 legislative session, Renters United Maryland reached out to us for messaging and social media support in getting a key bill related to evictions over its hurdles. SFM stepped up to create [this video](#) and hosted a community conversation to lift up the importance of the bill. We collected public comments for the hearing, our board member Tom Coale provided expert testimony on several bills, and we helped lobby legislators. On the education front, we supported advocates by developing and running a [series of online ads](#) highlighting our need to invest in our children and educators and created a number of [videos](#) highlighting the need for education equity. We even had college student and SFM advisor, Imani Payne take over [our Twitter account](#) to talk about why funding for HBCUs is important to her as an attendee of the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore.

Communicating Your Stories

SFM believes in providing access and pathways for underrepresented, frontline, and marginalized voices to communicate their stories to legislators and the public and helping you highlight the impact of policies on your constituencies. We have created for our website a *Share Your Story* function that allows people to provide video testimonials on issues that are important to them. A great example of this function in practice comes from AFSCME, the labor union representing public employees. SFM set up a unique page

just for AFSCME employees and members to tell their stories about how COVID has affected them, and what protections they need. Ask us how we might do the same for your organization!

SFM may also be able to partner on messaging research. As an example, in March 2020, we released the [results of polling](#) commissioned in partnership with the State Innovation Exchange (SiX).

Community Newsletter

To continue to build the strength of Maryland's progressive community, we just launched the first edition of the monthly SFM Community Newsletter. We hope to share information about different community engagement opportunities, from volunteer opportunities to upcoming events to workshops, and more. To include something important to your organization, email maya@strongfuturemd.org.

Planning Ahead: 2023 Project

Strong Future Maryland is piloting The 2023 Project, which would lay the groundwork for bold, progressive policies with the incoming Maryland gubernatorial administration by impacting the trajectory of gubernatorial transition planning and nurturing relationships between advocates and a new administration; lifting up progressive policy priorities, values, and strategic solutions; and ensuring accountability. To learn more, email alice@strongfuturemd.org