



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 764 Education - Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today Program - Established and Mandated Funding

POSITION: Oppose

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: February 12, 2021

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) opposes public funding for vouchers or other aid for private and parochial schools. This bill, HB 764, Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Program is another form of providing state aid for nonpublic education. The state's primary responsibility is to support public school students, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language, and physical and academic ability. **The LWVMD strongly opposes HB 764**, which would increase state aid to nonpublic schools.

This is the wrong time to be sending more money to private and parochial schools when public schools are struggling to cope with the impact of Covid-19 and students are suffering. Public schools have long been under and inequitably funded, as the Kirwan Commission documented in 2020.¹ The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB1300), which was vetoed by the Governor, would have been a step toward correcting this under and inequitable funding. Because of the veto, that funding has been delayed. Now is not the time to send more money to non-public schools. We need to support all our public schools, not just a few nonpublic schools.

HB 764 calls for a mandated annual appropriation of \$15,000,000 for scholarships for students attending nonpublic schools. Funding for the BOOST program keeps creeping up. The FY2018 budget allocated \$5.5 million for the scholarship program. This allocation increased to \$8,850,000 in FY2019 and \$10,000,000 in FY2021. This needs to stop.

The League opposes the FY2022 increase in funding for the BOOST program and urges the General Assembly to find a way to eliminate this program as soon as possible.

We urge the committee to give an unfavorable report to HB 764 for the \$15,000,000 mandated allocation for the BOOST program.

¹ Maryland Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education (December 2020). *Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Final Report*. Retrieved from <http://dls.maryland.gov/policy-areas/commission-on-innovation-and-excellence-in-education>