



## Testimony for the House Ways and Means Committee

February 12, 2021

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

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#### OPPOSED

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The ACLU of Maryland has long opposed taxpayer subsidies for private and religious schools, in the many and increasing forms that they have taken in our state – vouchers, subsidies for textbooks and technology, and subsidies to maintain and improve private school buildings. This year, the ACLU strongly opposes Governor Larry Hogan’s proposed expansion of the BOOST program by \$2.6 million, to a total of \$10 million and opposes the creation of the BOOST program and annual appropriation of \$15 million a year in funding.

The vast majority of the schools that receive subsidies through the BOOST program are religious schools, which improperly entangles public taxpayer dollars with religious teachings. Undeniable evidence has surfaced to expose the reality that some BOOST funded schools are in fact, operating with discriminatory practices. There remain serious transparency concerns about what government dollars are supporting religious teachings and whether those policies and practices are in-line with the strong, inclusive anti-discrimination standards that govern our public schools.

To shift funds away from public schools, which educate the vast majority of students in our state, no matter who they are is unacceptable. Private and religious schools do not have to meet the same non-discrimination standards as public schools. Furthermore, there are currently no clear, consistent curriculum and testing requirements that would ensure that in exchange for state subsidies, private and religious schools will be held to the same standard as public schools.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Maryland opposes HB 764 and urges an unfavorable report.

