



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 1156 Primary and Secondary Education - Education Savings Account Program - Established

POSITION: Oppose

BY: Nancy Soreng – President

Date: March 15, 2022

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) opposes public funding for vouchers or other aid for private and parochial schools. This bill, HB 1156 Primary and Secondary Education - Education Savings Account Program - Established, 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 1156**, 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 Although the veto of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB1300) has been overridden, funding has been delayed. We need to use our resources to support all our public schools, not just a few nonpublic schools. This program would provide money for nonpublic school tuition, online learning programs, private tutoring, and other contracted services. Under this program, the state would deposit a percentage of the per pupil state and local funding for each education program in an eligible student's resident school district directly into the parent's Education Savings Account. Further, the county would have to reimburse the state for the amount provided for the student's account, placing an undue burden on local school districts.

We urge the committee to give an unfavorable report to HB 1156.

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>