

**Testimony in OPPOSITION of House Bill 1156
Primary and Secondary Education – Education Savings Account Program -
Established**

**House Appropriations Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association respectfully opposes House Bill 1156, which would siphon off public school funding into newly established Education Savings Accounts to pay for private school education.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators who work in Maryland’s public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

House Bill 1156 allows for the creation of Education Savings Accounts for families to pay nonpublic school tuition. This bill takes away funding from our public schools and puts them in personalized savings accounts that families can use at nonpublic “qualified schools.” Per lines 9-14 on page 2 of the bill, it seems that this program is intended to target students currently attending public school.

This bill is very similar to the American Legislative Exchange Council’s (ALEC) Education Savings Account Act model legislation¹, which has been introduced in many states across the country. The National Education Association² says it best: “No matter how you look at it, vouchers undermine strong public education and student opportunity. They take scarce funding from public schools—which serve 90 percent of students—and give it to private schools—institutions that are not accountable to taxpayers. This means public school students have less access to music instruments and science equipment, modern technology and textbooks, and after-school programs.”

As our public schools face billions of dollars in unmet needs and will need even more to address the learning loss and trauma due to the pandemic, it is unconscionable that more public dollars would be diverted to private schools that— have less rigorous accountability standards—while underperforming in comparison to public schools.

MSEA urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1156.

¹ <https://www.alec.org/model-policy/the-education-savings-account-act-2/>

² <https://www.nea.org/student-success/smart-just-policies/funding-public-schools/opposing-vouchers>