



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of  
House Bill 704: Primary and Secondary Education – Education Savings Account Program – Established**

**Appropriations Committee**

**Position: Oppose**

March 6, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policy changes to further educational equity. As a result, Strong Schools Maryland strongly opposes House Bill 704: Maryland Universal School Choice Act.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future aims to establish a World-Class public school system for our state’s students. With record breaking investments in the education system, the State has shown dedication to ensuring that Maryland students excel on a global level. Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) as described in this proposed legislation would potentially allow for public funds to be used to supplement private school tuition, fundamentally conflicting the Blueprint’s vision.

House Bill 704:

- Permits the establishment of Education Savings Accounts for families to pay nonpublic school tuition;
- Redirects funding from our public schools to personalized savings accounts that families can use at nonpublic “qualified schools;” and
- Targets students currently attending public school, resulting in negative implications for other students, staff, and communities as a whole.

This bill mirrors the American Legislative Exchange Council’s (ALEC) Education Savings Account Act model legislation, which has been introduced in many states across the country.<sup>1</sup> Not only is this legislation associated with the significant diversion of public funds from public education and the disenfranchisement of taxpayers, it is also associated with egregious oversight in accountability measures.<sup>2</sup>

In passing the Blueprint, the General Assembly made the commitment to students: to channel resources into five pillars to transform public education, through equitable practices, so that Maryland’s student achievement would be competitive with the highest achieving countries in the world. House Bill 704, however, poses a real threat by diverting funds away from our public education system, hindering our efforts to establish a World-Class school accessible to all students.

**For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 705.**

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<sup>1</sup> [ALEC](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Research on school vouchers suggests concerns ahead for education savings accounts, 2023](#)