
**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 615
Maryland Senator Edward J. Kasemeyer College Investment Plan – State
Contributions - Alterations**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports Senate Bill 615, which closes a loophole by prohibiting opening more than one matching 529 account per beneficiary. This loophole created an unintended voucher program due to federal tax changes in 2017 and is eating up funds intended to help working Maryland families afford higher education. Passing this legislation and stopping this unintended voucher program is critical.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees 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).

Senate Bill 615 is one of Maryland’s answers to language that was inserted into Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 that allows parents to pay for private school K-12 tuition with 529 account funds. That was never the intent in Maryland and as the program currently stands, Maryland taxpayers are subsidizing private school tuition with funds designed to incentivize saving for college. The Maryland Higher Education Commission estimates that student loan debt is about \$1.48 trillion nationally, and the average student loan debt in Maryland is around \$27,455 per student. Unfortunately, the loophole in the 529 program results in less funding available to address skyrocketing student loan debt. According to a press release from Governor Hogan in 2018, the 529 “program was designed to help families, especially those from low- and middle-income households, have the opportunity to start saving for college for their children.” Marylanders struggle to afford higher education, and the legislature should restore this program to its original intent.

The Kirwan Commission has determined that Maryland will need to put substantially more resources into education if our state is to help our citizens become truly successful in the very competitive national and global economies. This is the time to locate and allocate more resources to public education, and to make sure current expenditures are used for their intended purposes. The passage of this bill helps to do just that.

MSEA urges the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 615