



# Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

Web site - [www.marylandeducationcoalition.org](http://www.marylandeducationcoalition.org) \*\*\* Email – [md.education.coaliton@gmail.com](mailto:md.education.coaliton@gmail.com)

---

February 19, 2020

House Ways and Means Committee  
Anne Kaiser, Chair

Re: [HB0724](#) - Education - Public Charter Schools - Virtual Learning Programs

In 1988, Albert Shanker, legendary president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), [gave a speech](#) at the National Press Club where he outlined his vision for a new kind of publicly funded, independently managed school. He called them “charters” and saw them as educational laboratories, where teachers could try out new pedagogical approaches. **By empowering teachers to experiment with their craft, charters could serve as R&D spaces for new and better practices that could then be transferred back into traditional public schools.**<sup>1</sup>

MEC urges the committee to table or oppose HB 724 Virtual Learning Programs at minimum until there is further study of what already exist in our traditional public schools, what may be lacking or in need of improvement not just in the quality of courses offered, but the instructional resources or technology need in our ever-changing 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Virtual Learning has existed for decades under various names such as Distance Learning and these programs have been used, researched and developed to improve and grown within some Maryland School systems for years. Often it has been used to offer courses in multiple schools or locations without the student leaving the school, but today, some school districts also use it to teach career tech courses. Therefore, Virtual Learning is not new nor innovative and significant research is available that can be applied for multiple programs or purposes.

More recently, some school districts have expanded professional development for administrators, educators and support staff. It is often less costly and time consuming while allowing more access that may not normally have it without traveling or transferring to another facility. It also saves duplication of instruction resources or supplies, because they only need enough for one location that serves multiple locations. In addition, some may want to add or expand such opportunities if they had additional funding or resources to do so all while operating within a traditional public school.

Lastly, it is unclear what the real objective is for the supporters of this legislation, because to some it may look like it may be designed for non-public or private interest to create a school that is fully funded using public funds without some of the policies or accountability measures required of traditional public schools. In addition, we are concern with how attendance could be accurately verified without a physical presence and tools used even in the private sector have been found to be inaccurate with loopholes.

Again, we urge an unfavorable report for HB 724.

Also, see additional reports, research and more at: <http://www.nea.org/home/60831.htm>

---

<sup>1</sup> [The Untold History of Charter Schools](#)