



## TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

### HB 1113 Primary and Secondary Education - Education Savings Account Program - Established

**POSITION: Oppose**

**BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents**

**Date: March 11, 2021**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) opposes public funding for vouchers or other aid for private and parochial schools. This bill, HB 1113 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 1113**, 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 into a parent's Education Savings Account 25% of the per pupil state and local funding for each education program in the resident school district for which the eligible student would be included if the family's income is less than or equal to 500% of the federal poverty level for the previous calendar year. If the family's income is over 500% of the federal poverty level, 18.75% of the state and local per pupil funding would be deposited into the educational savings account. 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. Parents could add pretax money to the Education Savings Account.

We urge the committee to give an unfavorable report to HB 1113.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>