



# Maryland Education Coalition



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Date: March 1, 2022

TITLE: Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

BILL: [HB415](#)

POSITION: STRONGLY OPPOSE

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) strongly opposes HB415 - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students, which could provide \$10-16 million in mandated funding for scholarships (vouchers) for some students attending nonpublic schools. MEC opposes allocating public dollars toward private school choice for a limited number of students.

MEC supports adequate, equitable investment of public money for public schools and state approved nonpublic special needs schools only. Adequately and equitably funding Maryland’s public schools is essential for ensuring that all students can achieve state standards and learn the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to be contributing members in our communities. MEC does not oppose nonpublic schools, but we do oppose the use of any public operating or capital funds for scholarships, vouchers, tax credits, or tax subsidies for all other non-public, private, parochial, or home schools.

Maryland anticipates phasing-in adequate and equitable resources for Maryland’s school students to achieve a 21<sup>st</sup> century education through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future over the next decade. That means students attending school today do not attend schools that meet the bare minimum of the state’s constitutional standard that all students should be provided a thorough and efficient public education as measured by state contemporary standards. To the extent that there are additional dollars available for education those resources should be dedicated toward public education to meet the needs of Maryland’s most vulnerable populations; lower income, special needs or Limited English students.

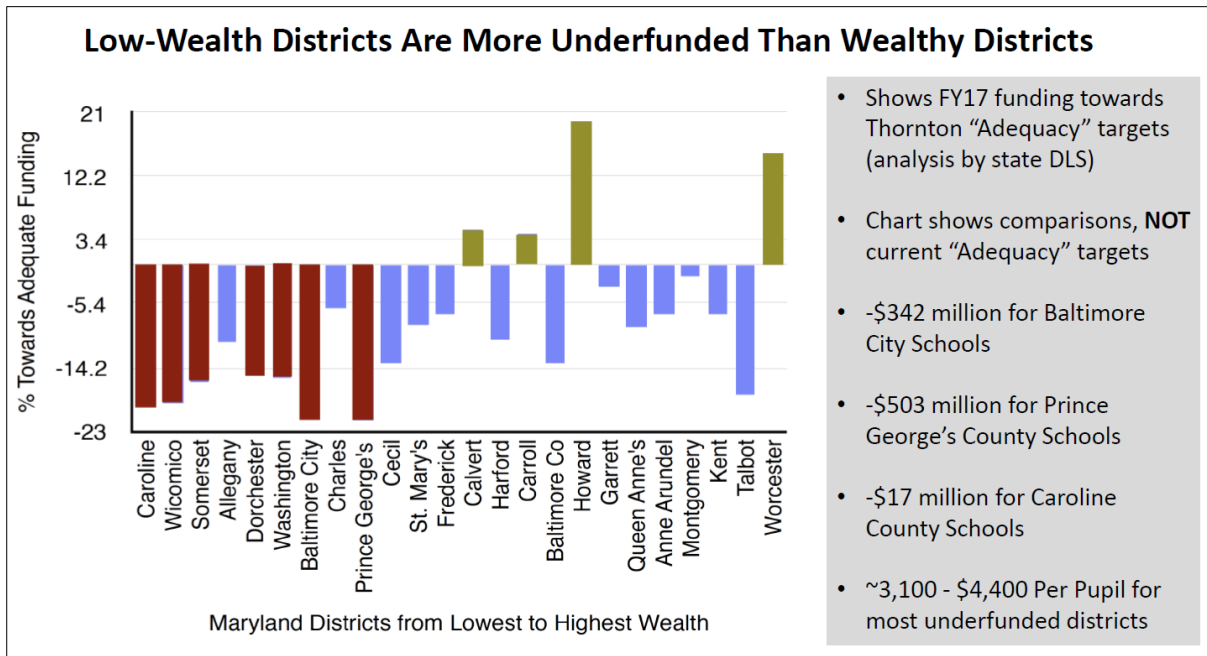
Public education is a constitutional right based on [Article VIII of the Maryland Constitution](#) that requires all public school students equitable access to a quality education so each may graduate college or career-ready. It is also a civil right based on several federal and state laws or regulations. These same policies and rights do not apply to many nonpublic schools.

State funds provided to nonpublic schools historically do not require detailed data on how public funding is used nor any comparable assessments on how nonpublic students or schools perform academically compared to similar public schools. Public schools are required to accept and serve all students regardless of who they are, where they live or family income, etc. Public schools are also required to collect and report a wide range of academic and school operation data to the state and federal government that is not required to be provided by most nonpublic schools and there is no similar data that proves nonpublic schools perform as well or better than public schools.

For these and other reasons, we oppose SB401 and urge an unfavorable report.

*See attached for some highlights related to the public education budget.*

American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, Children’s Behavioral Health Coalition, Decoding Dyslexia of MD, Disability Rights Maryland, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, Right to Read Maryland, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland Coalition for Gifted & Talented Ed, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition, Maryland Out of School Time Network, Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, MSC-NAACP, Maryland School Psychologists’ Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Public Justice Center, School Social Workers of MD, Strong Schools Maryland, Kalman Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Shanetta Martin, Sharon Rubinstein, Rick Tyler, Jr.



**\*CONSTITUTION OF MARYLAND, ARTICLE VIII, EDUCATION. SECTION 1.** The General Assembly, at its First Session after the adoption of this Constitution, "shall by Law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of **Free Public Schools**; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance."

No where in the constitution does it mandate funding for nonpublic, private, parochial or homeschools.