



March 1, 2022

**HB 415: Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
House Appropriations Committee
Position: SUPPORT**

I offer this testimony in support of HB 415. The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the policies or position of Johns Hopkins University or the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy.

I speak in support of a mandatory annual appropriation from the state budget for the BOOST scholarship program.

For more than a hundred years, the American ideal has been a uniform public education system that delivers equal educational access for all. Unfortunately, this dream is not the reality faced by many families. Certainly, public education works for many, but to say that because it works for some it should work for all is a false argument. The quality across schools, and even within schools, varies greatly. Consider that students and families have different needs and it becomes clear that one-size-fits-all traditional public education cannot work.

Affluent parents have always had choices, either by paying tuition out of pocket, or by living in high quality and well-resourced school districts. It is those parents without the financial resources who have historically had limited educational choice. Scholarship programs, such as BOOST, offer a choice to students and families most in need.

COVID-19 disruptions to education have highlighted the inequities and disfunction in traditional public education systems across the country. COVID has also amplified the voices of parents who want a choice in where their child goes to school. Last year seven states enacted new choice programs and 15 states expanded 23 existing programs. So far this year, 21 states are considering 35 educational choice expansion bills, with eight in Virginia alone. Choice is the norm and demand is growing.

To date, 33 states offer some sort of educational choice and 29+ states have scholarship programs similar to BOOST. However, Maryland is the only scholarship program that is budget-based, thus leaving students and their families vulnerable to losing scholarship funding in the future. Guaranteed funding will ensure that families in need are guaranteed access to BOOST scholarships.

Finally, research shows that while these programs clearly benefit participating students, they also benefit public schools, teachers, and students! Because the average scholarship value is approximately \$2,000, public school systems retain the vast majority of the local, state, and federal funding without the expense of actually educating scholarship recipients. At least six studies find the competitive effects of non-public educational choice has a positive effect on public school teachers' salaries. Of 27 peer reviewed studies that examine the competitive effects of scholarship programs on remaining public

school students' test scores, 25 find positive effects, one found no effect, and only one found any negative effect. (See resources for study links.)

In sum, permanent appropriation for the BOOST scholarship honors Maryland's commitment to equitable educational access and reflects the norm across the country.

Respectfully submitted,

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Resources

Competitive effects of scholarship program on remaining public school students' test scores, see Findings, slides 28 and 29. <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/> *Looking across 27 studies, they find positive effects of scholarships on the test scores of students who remained in the public schools.*

Measuring Competitive Effects from School Voucher Programs: A systematic review. Anna Egalite. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15582159.2013.837759> *Review of 21 peer reviewed studies of private school choice find net positive effects on test scores of remaining public school students.*

The Competitive Effects of School Choice on Student Achievement: A systematic review. Huriya Jabbar et al. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0895904819874756> *Positive effects on student achievement.*

Effects of Scaling Up Private School Choice Programs on Public School Students. David Figlio, et al. <https://www.cesifo.org/en/publikationen/2021/working-paper/effects-scaling-private-school-choice-programs-public-school> *They find positive effects on test scores, as well as decreased absenteeism and suspension rates for remaining public school students.*

Politics, Markets and Pandemics: Public Education's Response to COVID-19. Michael Hartney and Leslie Finger. <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai20-304> *Public schools with more neighboring private schools were more likely to reopen for in-person instruction sooner.*

Table: Effect of School Choice Competition on Public School Teacher Salaries

Study	Type	Location	Finding
Hoxby (1994)	Private	United States	+
Vedder & Hall (2000)	Private	Ohio	+
Hensvik (2012)	Private	Sweden	+
Jackson (2012)	Charter	North Carolina	+
DeAngelis & Shuls (2018)	Private	United States	+
DeAngelis & Shuls (2018)	Charter	United States	Mixed

Source <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/school-choice-benefits-teachers-too>