



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 1258 Primary and Secondary Education – Educational Options – Established

POSITION: Oppose

BY: Nancy Soreng – President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) opposes public funding for vouchers or other aid for private and parochial schools. This bill, *HB 1258 Primary and Secondary Education – Educational Options – 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 1258**, which would redirect millions of public dollars away from public schools, toward 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, staff shortages, and the need to provide extra services to help students catch up. After a delay, public schools are beginning to receive the increased funding allocated under the Blueprint, but they are by no means fully funded. Now is not the time to mandate more money to nonpublic schools. We need to support all our public schools, not just a few nonpublic schools.

HB 1258 codifies the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today Program (BOOST) to provide scholarships for students who are eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program to attend a nonpublic school. It requires the governor to appropriate \$20,000,000 per year for the program. This bill also provides for a credit against state income tax of families for home instruction expenses up to \$5760 per year, a tax expenditure.

LWVMD also opposes the section giving the Maryland Public Charter School Authority the power to authorize charters. Our position is that *Local boards of education determine which groups or organizations will be granted contracts i.e., "charters"), with the right to an appeal of that decision to the State Board of Education.*

The League of Women Voters of Maryland with 1500+ members urges the committee to give an unfavorable report to HB 1258.