



Maryland Education Coalition



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Date: February 24, 2022 - 1:00 p.m.

BILL: [HB0737](#)

POSITION: STRONGLY OPPOSE

COMMITTEE: [Ways and Means](#)

TITLE: Alternative Education Options - Right to Learn and Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today Programs (Right to Learn Act of 2022)

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) is the oldest, largest, most diverse and experienced public education stakeholder group in Maryland and we **strongly oppose** [HB0737- Alternative Education Options - Right to Learn and Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today Programs](#). MEC believes a 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. We also believe it is a **civil right** based on several federal and state laws or regulations. These same mandates and rights do not apply to most nonpublic, parochial, private or homes schools. This bill proposes to use taxpayer funds to create a new voucher program, labeled Alternative Education Options, using a single source, outdated rating system that has not been used for two years and only partially measures school or student success.

MEC supports adequate, equitable investment of public money for public schools only - essential for teaching the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for our children to be contributing members in our communities, without discrimination. MEC does not oppose nonpublic schools, but we do oppose the use of public operating or capital funds for vouchers, tax credits, or tax subsidies for non-public, private, parochial, or home schools.

Public schools are also 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 including the use of the Star Rating system, which is only one of multiple tools to measure school success. State funds provided to nonpublic schools historically do not require detailed data on how public funding is used nor any comparable assessments, such as the Star Rating system, on how nonpublic students or schools perform academically compared to similar public schools.

[HB0737](#) raises numerous other concerns and questions to MEC and others including the following examples:

- This bill if passed could create a new, separate, but unequal nonpublic school structure
- There is no comparable accountability of taxpayer funds nor academic performance and most nonpublic schools do not show evidence of need nor do they publicly report finances including endowments or outside contributions.
- There is no requirement that would require such schools or programs to administer, assess or report comparable assessment and other data used for accountability purposes to measure academic performance, disaggregated enrollment data or a detailed use of public funds compared to numerous public school mandates
- This bill is void of any anti-discrimination clause to protect a wide range of staff, student or family admission or removal especially lower income, special needs, Limited English, students of color, or certain family groups, etc.
- The bill also appears to be void of any consideration of the enrollment or accommodations for students identified as special need, Limited English, etc. who may require non-traditional services

This bill also does not recognize that most, if not all public school systems offer multiple education options including numerous education programs, student services, tutoring, before/aftercare, community schools and much more often not found or available without additional cost to nonpublic students or families. Therefore, MEC urges the General Assembly to ensure that the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and all other public education operation and capital needs are adequately and equitably met and vote unfavorably for HB737.

American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, 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, MAREE, MSC-NAACP, Maryland School Psychologists' Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Public Justice Center, School Social Workers of MD, Strong Schools Maryland, Kalam Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Shanetta Martin, Sharon Rubinstein, Rick Tyler, Jr.