



## TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

**HB 649 Primary and Secondary Education - Education Savings Account Program  
- Established**

**POSITION: Oppose**

**BY: Nancy Soreng – President**

**Date: March 14, 2023**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) opposes public funding for vouchers or other aid for private and parochial schools. This bill, HB 649 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 649**, which would increase state aid to nonpublic schools.

This bill creates a voucher program since it allows the parent of an eligible student to use state funds to provide for that student's education. This program would provide money to parents to use for nonpublic school tuition, online learning programs, private tutoring, and other contracted services. Under this program, the state would deposit 75% of the per pupil state and local funding into a parent's Education Savings Account for each eligible student. This includes students whose 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, 50% of the state and local per pupil funding would be deposited into the educational savings account. The school district 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.

This is the wrong time to be sending 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 Blueprint for Maryland's Future (HB1300) is currently funded, Maryland will need additional revenue beginning in FY2026. We need to use our resources to support all our public schools, not just a few nonpublic schools.

We urge the committee to give an unfavorable report to HB 649.

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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>