



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: HB 649

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Education Savings Account Program - Established

DATE: March 14, 2023

POSITION: Oppose

COMMITTEE: House Appropriations Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 649.

House Bill 649 seeks to establish an Education Savings Account (ESA) program in the State, which would provide grants to families to defray specified costs related to nonpublic education. This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to administer the program. Additionally, this bill allows a subtraction modification under the Maryland income tax for deposits into an education savings account under the Education Savings Account program.

PSSAM opposes public financing for private schools in every shape and size, including education savings accounts and the use of public financing tools for families choosing non-public schools. While seemingly not a voucher program, this program provides public dollars to parents choosing nonpublic schooling private schools, which diverts scarce resources away from the public education system that serves 90% of American children.

PSSAM does not support increasing the burden on state revenues and future state budgets by establishing an income tax credit to benefit parents who exercise their choice to provide their children with nonpublic schooling. Unlike public schools, nonpublic schools have no little to no means of direct accountability to taxpayers for their use of tax revenues, and receive little oversight in areas such as special education and teacher certification regulations. Additionally, funds provided to parents through ESA programs in other states have been found ripe for fraud and abuse -- In 2018, the state's Auditor General in Arizona found that parents misused over

\$700,000 in ESA funds on items such as beauty supplies and sports apparel, with no way for the state to recoup the money.

The diversion of public education funds to nonpublic schools is likely to have serious economic, legal, and public policy consequences. If public education funds were to be used for the support of nonpublic schools, fewer resources would be available for public elementary and secondary schools. This diversion of public education funding would impede the ability of localities to ensure an appropriate, safe, and equitable education for all students -- an high standard of accountability held to us by taxpayers who directly fund public education programs.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 649 and requests an unfavorable committee report.