



Maryland Retired School Personnel Association

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House Bill 0675

In Opposition Of

Primary and Secondary Education – Education Savings Account Program – Established (Maryland Universal School Choice Act) Appropriations Committee Hearing: March 6, 2024

Dear Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair, and Honorable Delegate Mark Chang, Vice Chair, and distinguished Appropriations Committee members,

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association strongly opposes HB 0675 Primary and Secondary Education – Education Savings Account Program – Established (Maryland Universal School Choice Act).

We strongly oppose this legislation because we firmly believe that public funds should forward the goals of public, not private, education. Any public money spent on private education diminishes public education. Increasing support for public education promotes the Maryland State Department of Education's vision statement that says Maryland will have "a system of world-class schools."

Additionally, we have concerns about some specific items in this bill. For example, this money could be used for "Private Tutoring" which defines the person providing the tutoring as anyone who is a teacher licensed in any state. The state of Maryland has very high standards for its public-school teachers. Not all states have those high standards. It also allows someone who is a "Subject matter expert" to provide private tutoring without defining who determines what an 'expert' is or what their qualifications might be. This seems to support the incorrect notion that "anyone can teach". There is a great difference in having information and knowing how to properly teach that information to others with often varied needs.

This bill also requires an education for eligible students in "...reading, grammar, social studies, and science." There seems to be no requirement for mathematics. Our point in noting this example is that students benefiting from these grants would not necessarily meet the same standards as our publicly educated students. It is a travesty to take public funds to educate students to a sub-standard level from what is required in public schools.

Additionally, this bill allows for expenditures for things like textbooks, uniforms, payment for instructional materials, fees for national non-referenced examinations, and other items which are or are not provided as part of public education. There is no reason to give public money to provide for items which are either not required (uniforms), or which are already part of public education. Will the General Assembly approve purchasing clothing for public school students if private school students clothing is an approved expenditure for public funds? Very simply, public funds should be used to promote public, not private, education.

On behalf of the 12,000 members of the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association, we urge vehement opposition to HB 0675.

Sincerely,

Carla J. Duls
President

Virginia G. Crespo
Legislative Aide