



Maryland Education Coalition



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HB0675 - Education Savings Account Program (*Maryland Universal School Choice Act*)

House Appropriations Committee

POSITION – STRONGLY UNFAVORABLE

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) advocates for adequate, equitable policies, funding, and transparent accountability statewide for the estimated 900,000 students in Maryland’s public schools, regardless of their academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial, or other demographic status. **We work to ensure that Maryland provides all public school students “a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance” as defined in the Maryland Constitution**, so all students are prepared to graduate college or career ready as defined in state and federal law. We believe this is their civil right.

MEC supports adequate, equitable investment of public money for public and approved private special needs schools only without discrimination, **but we strongly oppose the use of any public operating or capital funds for vouchers, tax credits, or tax subsidies for all other non-public, private, parochial, or home schools. This includes Education Savings Accounts or Scholarships.**

MEC strongly opposes HB0675- Education Savings Account Program (Maryland Universal School Choice Act) and urges the committee to issue an unfavorable report. This bill, if passed, is another attempt to modify public policies to remove public funds from public school systems, schools, and students permanently or temporarily that are required to educate all public school students.

In addition, this bill appears to attempt to replicate or duplicate many programs and services already offered within Maryland Public School systems include sometime defined and funded through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future such as tutoring, supplemental instruction and a range of opportunities within many community schools. In addition, students have many other education and student service opportunities or choices within public school systems including a growing number within Career-Technology Programs, Dual Enrollment, College Level programs (Advance Placement, International Baccalaureate programs, etc.), as well as academic and student services for students with disabilities and those with Limited English or from lower income families.

This bill also appears to assign additional roles and responsibilities to the State and Local Education Departments without additional defined resources to administer, staff or report all items listed within the bill. In addition, it appears to provide additional resources to parents without clear oversight or accountability for the use of public funds.

Public dollars for nonpublic schools divert public funds for public schools that could be used to fund programs and services more adequately for all public school students with real choices. **These additional funding needs within the State Aid for Education will become more urgent starting in FY 2026, when it is projected that Aid to Education may have an estimated \$429 million deficit rising to over \$5 billion by FY 2029!**

There are a number of other reasons not mentioned above for why MEC opposes public funds for non-public schools or services. Therefore, MEC urges the Appropriations Committee to issue an unfavorable report for HB0675 - Education Savings Account Program and to allocate all additional funding for the State Aid for Education budget in future years.

ACLU of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, Children’s Behavioral Health Coalition, Free State PTA, Decoding Dyslexia of Maryland, Disability Rights Maryland, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, Maryland Coalition for Gifted & Talented Ed, Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition, MSC-NAACP, Maryland Out of School Time Network, Maryland School Psychologists’ Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Public Justice Center, School Social Workers of MD, Strong Schools Maryland, Kalman R. Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Rick Tyler, Jr., Sharon Rubinstein