



Maryland Education Coalition



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HB0791 - Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

House Appropriations Committee

POSITION – STRONGLY OPPOSE

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) was originally founded over 40 years ago (1980) and is the oldest, most experienced, and diverse public education advocacy coalition in Maryland. MEC advocates for adequate funding, equitable policies, 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. Our mission and primary purpose have always been based on **the Maryland Constitution, Article VIII – Education, SECTION 1., which says – “The General Assembly, ..., shall by Law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance”.**

MEC supports adequate, equitable investment of public money for public and approved private special needs schools only without discrimination. MEC also opposes 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 has consistently included the BOOST programs and any initiative that may take public operating or capital funds or resources away from FREE public schools.

Therefore, **MEC strongly opposes HB0791 - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students and urges the committees to issue an unfavorable report.** If passed, this bill could *“Require the Governor, beginning in fiscal year 2026, to include in the annual budget bill General Fund appropriations of certain amounts for the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today Program.”*. **It could also require the Governor to allocate \$52 million dollars between 2026 and 2029 for certain nonpublic schools without reporting or accountability required of all public schools!**

Revenue for the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future fund Structural Balance is projected to have a \$581 million deficit for FY 2025 rising to a \$2.6 billion deficit by FY 2029 and the Closing Fund Balance is projected to have a \$429 million deficit by FY 2027 rising to over \$5.1 billion by FY 2029. Therefore, the Maryland Governor and General Assembly must reserve all available revenue to meet the promises to Fully Fund the Blueprint as defined in current law and to meet the mandates as defined in the Maryland Constitution.

These promises or mandates do not apply to non-public, private, parochial, or home schools nor do does that state require schools that receive state aid for BOOST or other requests to publicly report or held accountable for state aide or academic performance of all students at a level comparable to all public schools. Therefore, the State has limited knowledge on how state funds are spent or whether ALL students within nonpublic schools are performing academically as well or better than comparable public schools. In addition, regardless of the law, MEC is still receiving reports that some nonpublic schools that currently receive funds for BOOST are still using subtle methods to exclude some students who may be identified as having Special Needs or Limited English.

Therefore, MEC urges the Maryland House Appropriations Committee and their General Assembly colleagues to issue an unfavorable report for HB0791 - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students.

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