



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 791 - Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
House Appropriations Committee
February 20, 2024**

OPPOSE

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 791 - Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

HB 791 commits the state to spending \$10 million per year on subsidizing private school educations and increases the state's commitment by \$2 million per year, each year, until Fiscal Year 2029. Every dollar spent on private schools out of the General Fund is less for the state's Blueprint for Maryland's Future educational commitments.

Maryland public schools are some of the best in the nation, mostly due to the decisions made to prioritize public education funding. Over the coming decade, Maryland will invest billions into public education. While other states were diverting funding to private schools – and seeing a decline in their overall state educational performance – Maryland increased public funding, and saw the benefits from doing so. HB 791 will undo progress and set us on a path to divesting in our public education to bring about a negative outcome for our public schools.

Strengthening our public schools should be the number one goal! Diverting funds away from public schools is not the answer. Education spending is an investment in our future. We urge an unfavorable report on HB 791.