

MD Catholic Conference_SB 552_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



February 7, 2023

SB 552

Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 552. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. Catholic schools also educate nearly 50,000 of the roughly 135,000 nonpublic school students in Maryland.

Senate Bill 552 would simply codify the BOOST Scholarship Program, funded in the Maryland state budget since 2016, and thus provide scholarship continuity for future generations of low-income children through the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Scholarship Program.

For the current school year, simply based on the going rates (which are not full scholarships), student applications reflected \$18 million in scholarship demand for the \$9 million available for the program. Nearly 2,000 low-income students were denied scholarships due to a lack of funding. This legislation would help alleviate much of that unmet need.

We offer this testimony on behalf of the large number of low-income families attending Catholic schools statewide who receive BOOST scholarship assistance and the thousands more who would seek that assistance in the future. The BOOST Scholarship Program has provided expanded educational options for low-income Maryland K-12 students through the provision of scholarship assistance in the Maryland budget since 2016. One hundred percent of scholarship recipients are eligible for the Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program (FARMS). Scholarship recipients are certified as eligible through the State Department of Education (MSDE). This bill would continue to provide scholarship assistance to 100% low-income FARMS-eligible students.

To date, BOOST has provided approximately 23,000 scholarships, the majority of which have been awarded to minority recipients. BOOST is helping to break the cycle of poverty for minority students whose parents choose a Catholic school using a BOOST Scholarship, as an average of 98% of students who graduate at a Maryland Catholic school go on to graduate and

attend college. BOOST is also enhancing the education of students with disabilities, with double scholarship awards going to students with special needs.

In all, the BOOST Scholarship Program has helped to make Catholic schools an option for so many families. The majority of BOOST scholarships and scholarship dollars over the history of the program have been awarded to students whose parents chose a Catholic school this year, many having transferred from a public school. The scholarship recipient demographic data cited above mirrors that of our school families in many Catholic schools, which welcome large numbers of low-income, immigrant and first-generation, minority, and non-Catholic students.

The BOOST Scholarship Program has acted as an integral supplemental source of assistance to low-income families, fostering a partnership between Catholic schools and the State of Maryland to fight the cycle of poverty. Our Catholic schools remain committed to working alongside the State of Maryland in providing options for low-income students. It is for these reasons, on behalf of the families empowered by BOOST scholarships to choose Catholic schools, that we urge the Maryland General Assembly to secure BOOST funding well into the future through Senate Bill 552.

SB 552 Sen Corderman Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV

PAUL D. CORDERMAN
Legislative District 2
Frederick and Washington Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 7, 2024

Senate Budget & Tax Committee
Chair Guy Guzzone
Vice Chair Jim Rospepe
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill SB 552 – Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, & Members of the Budget & Tax Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present SB 552 – Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students. This bill will ensure funding in the budget for the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today, or BOOST, Program.

Since 2016, this Program has shown great success in offering opportunities to students who need them the most. The vital scholarships offered through this Program go directly to low-income nonpublic school students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Meals Program. As we learn more about the uniqueness and diversity of each student's educational needs, Programs like BOOST set children up for success and a solid future with options for more individualized experiences.

Children and their educational success are the focus of this bill. When children thrive, their families and communities can thrive as well. Thank you for your consideration and I respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB 552.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P.D. Corderman".

Paul D. Corderman
District 2 – Washington & Frederick Counties

Agudah testimony - SB 552 BOOST -FAV - 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Rabbi Ariel Sadwin

Position: FAV



SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION SUBCOMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 7, 2024

SENATE BILL 552

OPERATING BUDGET – FUNDING – SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

**TESTIMONY OF RABBI ARIEL SADWIN,
DIRECTOR, AGUDATH ISRAEL OF MARYLAND**

SUPPORT

Agudath Israel of Maryland (AIMD), the Mid-Atlantic regional office for Agudath Israel of America – a renown national Jewish advocacy organization, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland. AIMD provides support and representation for the 30 Jewish day schools that operate in our great state.

During the 2016 legislative session the General Assembly created a program in the State Budget to provide low-income (free and reduced meal eligible) families with the opportunity of selecting a school that they determine to be better suited for their children, by initiating and funding the BOOST program. While our society has always given families the right to choose *where* their child will go to receive his or her education, the associated costs to attend a nonpublic school most often makes it prohibitively difficult. With the creation of the BOOST program, the hopes and dreams of thousands of families were fulfilled with the availability of scholarship dollars to attend the eligible nonpublic school of their choosing.

Now, after eight years of the BOOST program, thanks to the great dedication of MSDE staff and the guidance of the BOOST advisory board, thousands of low-income students across minority and low-income communities have received the scholarships and are attending these participating schools. These students and their families are thrilled and ever grateful for the opportunity given to them with the scholarship grants they have received. The ever-so-modest increases in the program's funding since it began has allowed for additional funds to be provided to students with special education needs and additional dollars to help defray the higher tuition costs for high school students.

The schools that participate in this program all sign assurances that are laid out by the BOOST advisory board as per the budget language passed by the legislature. Those assurances are in place to ensure that these schools operate with full transparency in the admissions, curriculum, and performance. Participating schools undergo rigorous assessment tests documenting the achievements of their students.

With the success of the program and the great benefit it has provided Maryland children, this program is worthy of permanent inclusion in Maryland's annual Operating Budget. Senate Bill 401 seeks to codify the program in its current form with a \$10 million allocation thru FY 2026. It will increase modestly over the following few years until it reaches \$16 million in FY 2029.

As we have appealed for your support of this great program each year in its current form, we seek your support in passing SB 552 into law to allow the great program to continue the good it does for Maryland children. Thank you for your past support and thank you for your future support. Please report favorably on SB 552.

MDCAPE Testimony - SB552 BOOST - FAV - 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Rabbi Dovid Heber

Position: FAV



SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION SUBCOMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 7, 2024

SENATE BILL 552

OPERATING BUDGET – FUNDING – SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SUPPORT

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of roughly 130,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

Since the 2016 legislative session of the General Assembly, low-income Maryland families who seek financial assistance to send their child to a nonpublic school have been endowed with that opportunity. Thanks to the BOOST scholarship program and the Maryland legislature who has supported it, families who have made the decision a nonpublic school is best suited for their child(ren), may apply for a scholarship to assist them in covering the tuition cost. Their desire for this form of education still comes at great financial sacrifice, but one that they are willing to make despite the hardship.

Now, after eight years of the BOOST program, thousands of FARMs eligible Maryland families, from across the spectrum of minority and less-fortunate communities of all ethnicities, have benefited from attending the nonpublic school of their choosing. Their appreciation for these scholarships and the opportunities it has provided their children knows no bounds.

Parents who have made this choice appreciate the standards to which participating schools are held. The student assessments that prove that educational progress is being made and the assurances binding each participating school implemented for the safety and well-being of Maryland children, all contribute to the great success that this program has had.

But, these needs have grown continuously, and the need for a permanent BOOST program in Maryland law is well-justified. Senate Bill 552 seeks to do just that. SB 552 sets the initial allocation at the traditional \$10 million until FY 2026, after which time it will modestly increase over the following three years.

We appeal for your continued support of these low-income children and their families to allow BOOST scholarships to be codified in Maryland. All of the families who attend nonpublic schools are still providing tremendous savings to the state, and they gladly sacrifice the luxuries enjoyed by others to cover their portion of the cost for what they feel is the best and most conducive education for their children.

Please report FAVORABLY on Senate Bill 552. Thank you for your support.

WEB: WWW.MDCAPE.ORG • EMAIL: INFO@MDCAPE.ORG

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SB 552 - Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: UNF



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

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Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

**SB 552 - Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
February 7, 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 SB 552 - 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.

SB 552 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. SB 552 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 SB 552.

SB 552.BOOST Mandated Funding Increases.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

BILL: Senate Bill 552
TITLE: Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
DATE: February 7, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 552 to mandate increased funding for the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) private school voucher program.

MABE opposes the operation and funding of the BOOST program, which inappropriately provides millions of dollars in special funds from the Cigarette Restitution Fund to support Maryland's private school voucher program. The program has never garnered support as a legislative initiative other than through the annual State Budget, where it was first established. In 2016, the State Budget Bill was amended in conference committee to establish the \$5 million BOOST Program to provide vouchers for students who are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program to attend eligible nonpublic schools.

Since then, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has been required to administer the voucher program, including through staff support for the BOOST Advisory Board. The Advisory Board's duties include reviewing and certifying the ranked list of applicants and determining the individual scholarship, or voucher, amounts. To be eligible to participate in the BOOST program a nonpublic school must participate in the Aid to Non-Public Schools Program for textbooks and computers administered by MSDE; and comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the State Government Article; and not discriminate in student admissions, retentions, or expulsions on the basis of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

MABE and other public education advocates have consistently and successfully opposed legislation to further codify the establishment of the BOOST program. Further, based on the performance of this program and the competing priorities of meaningful increases in State aid for public education, MABE supports reducing and eliminating funding for the BOOST program from the State Budget. The FY 2024 State Budget provided \$8 million, and the FY 2025 Budget Bill (SB 360) proposes a funding amount of \$9 million. Again, MABE opposes the continued funding for the BOOST program and therefore strongly opposes the mandated funding increases proposed in this legislation.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 552.

2-7 Unfav SB 552 Operating Budget - Funding - Sch

Uploaded by: Lois Hybl

Position: UNF



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

SB 552 Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships For Nonpublic School Students

POSITION: Oppose

BY: Linda T. Kohn - President

Date: February 7, 2024

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) opposes public funding for vouchers or other aid for private and parochial schools. This bill, SB 552 *Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students*, is another form of providing state aid for nonpublic education. The state's primary responsibility is to support public school students, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language, and physical and academic ability. **The LWVMD strongly opposes SB 552**, which would increase state aid to nonpublic schools.

This is the wrong time to mandate sending more money to private and parochial schools when public schools are struggling to cope with the impact of COVID-19, staff shortages, and the need to provide extra services to help students catch up. After a delay, public schools are beginning to receive the increased funding allocated under the Blueprint, but they are by no means fully funded. The state is also facing a structural deficit. We need to support all our public schools, not just a few nonpublic schools.

SB 552 calls for a mandated annual appropriation of \$10,000,000 for scholarships for students attending nonpublic schools in FY2026, and increases this allocation to \$16,000,000 in FY2029. Funding for the BOOST program keeps creeping up. The FY2018 budget allocated \$5.5 million for the scholarship program. This allocation increased to \$8,850,000 in FY2019 and \$10,000,000 in FY2021 and FY2022. This needs to stop.

We urge the committee to give an unfavorable report to SB 552 for the mandated allocation for the BOOST program increasing to \$16,000,000 in FY2029.

SB0552_UNF_mgoldstein 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Mathew Goldstein

Position: UNF



Secular Maryland

<https://secularmaryland.dorik.io> secularmaryland@tutanota.com

February 07, 2024

SBU552 - UNF

Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

Secular Maryland advocates for all youth to be educated in modern knowledge without omissions or qualifications. Our collective knowledge is rooted in an international consensus of subject matter experts that is logically derived using an overall best fit with the available empirical evidence criteria. Finding empirical evidence and convincingly relating the evidence to conclusions requires effort and time. The history of the pursuit of knowledge demonstrates that this epistemology is uniquely successful, there is no other approach that reliably reaches accurate conclusions about how our universe functions. Beliefs about how the universe functions that are derived outside the aforementioned framework are not knowledge. Teaching such beliefs to children as if they are knowledge is miseducation.

There are few restrictions on what private schools can teach their students, so they may mix academics, religion, and politics tightly together. Religious schools often have an institutional self-interest to try to convince children to accept the school's definition of deity. Young children are impressionable, teenagers are responsive to peer pressure, and as a result they are vulnerable to indoctrination. They may be taught that faith is one of the most important virtues, that one faith is superior to all other faiths, that they will be severely punished for disbelieving and greatly rewarded for believing, that particular beliefs about how the universe functions are requisite for morality thusly invalidating all other competing beliefs, They may actively teach children to distrust and fear competing perspectives, including secular academics. Some schools teach children blatant falsehoods that contradict modern scientific consensus. The result is potentially harmful miseducation that undermines the targeted victim's intellectual potential and can be difficult to undo

Private schools eligible for Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) vouchers are disproportionately religious and Catholic. The Pew Forum Religious Landscape Study estimated that 15% of Maryland residents are Catholic and 10% do not believe in a God. Yet 65% of the private schools that qualified for BOOST scholarship vouchers in 2016 were Catholic and 3% were nonreligious. Private schools are essentially religious institutions – Catholic, evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, etc. – whose enrollments and curriculum tend to reflect their sectarian orientation. Diverting public funds to private schools increases the separation among student populations along religious, ideological, and ethnic lines.

Even those religiously affiliated private schools that are the most ecumenical, that eschew holy book inerrancy, that seek to embrace modern knowledge, gratuitously add some unsubstantiated religious content and avoid some scientific details when teaching children how the universe functions to promote their religious worldview, resulting in a subtly biased and compromised education. Schools that do not promote young or old earth creationism or intelligent design may instead promote theistic evolution. These schools may teach students that satan intervenes in our universe and associate satan with non-theism. They may teach about Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jonah, virgin birth, resurrection, etc. as if they were historical facts. A commitment to know the facts regarding how the universe functions and to understand how to reliably distinguish between well-justified and poorly justified assertions are valuable civic virtues that government should be fostering, not undermining with private school “scholarships”.

Funding private school education is unlikely to provide better educational outcomes for Maryland’s children overall. At a Congressional House Education and Workforce Committee hearing on February 3, 2016 titled “Expanding Educational Opportunity through School Choice,” Luis Huerta, Associate Professor of Education & Public Policy at Columbia University, stated that none of the independent studies of the nation’s “most lauded and long-standing voucher programs...found any statistical evidence that children who utilized vouchers performed better than children who did not and remained in public schools.” However, Huerta said there is “evidence to support that[,] compared against students who participate in voucher programs, public school students fare better academically.” GAO researchers examined voucher and tax credit programs nationwide but concentrated on the major ones in Arizona, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin. The GAO reported on Sept. 12, 2016 that such programs “have weaker standards for teacher preparedness than public schools” and “cherry-pick student applicants ... often

discriminating against some students based on their religion or disability-related behaviors".

If this law is really about improving the quality of education and not about government subsidizing promotion of religious beliefs then BOOST eligible schools should be required to evaluate their students with the same standardized tests that public schools are required to utilize. The average test results of local public schools could then be compared with the average test results of the private schools that qualify for the vouchers. Vouchers could then be granted to those students attending eligible private schools only if their local public school scores lower on those tests than the private school.

If lawmakers want to reduce the cost of private education then they can provide additional funding to public schools to allow otherwise privately educated children to attend public school classes part time and/or to participate in public school sponsored extracurricular activities. Each county can have their own law regarding the extent to which their state public school classes and facilities are available to children who are otherwise receiving a private education. Private schools, and homeschooled children, should be lent the same government purchased textbooks that are utilized by the secular public schools. If lawmakers want to increase school choice then more publicly accountable charter schools provides a better alternative. These approaches to assisting privately educated children or to provide school choice minimize most of the problems that otherwise result from direct or indirect government funding of unaccountable private schools with parochial ideological agendas.

Respectfully,
Mathew Goldstein
3838 Early Glow Ln
Bowie, MD

SB0552-Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School

Uploaded by: Rick Tyler, Jr.-Chair

Position: UNF



Maryland Education Coalition



Ellie Mitchell & Rick Tyler, Jr. – Co-Chairs

Web site - www.marylandeducationcoalition.org

Email – md.education.coalition@gmail.com

February 7, 2024

SB0552 - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
POSITION – 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 also 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.**

SB0552 would require the Governor, to include in the annual budget bill General Fund appropriations of \$52 million for the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today Program for fiscal years 2026 through 2029 for eligible nonpublic schools that do not require students and schools to administrator and report data comparable to the Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) and Maryland Integrated Science Assessments (MISA) required of all Maryland public schools. Therefore, there is no comparable evidence of their academic performance for all students.

In addition, MEC has found that although there is an anti-discrimination policy, some nonpublic schools still use subtle methods to deny adequate access or services to students with significant disabilities, Limited English and other student groups or use inequitable implementation policies.

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. **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 a \$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. Therefore, MEC urges the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to issue an unfavorable report for SB0552: Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students and to allocate all additional funding as a reserve for in 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

SB552_MSEA_Zwerling_UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Samantha Zwerling

Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE
Senate Bill 552
Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
February 7, 2024

Samantha Zwerling
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association stands in strong opposition to Senate Bill 552, which codifies Maryland's school voucher program, Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST), into law and mandates an increasing amount of funding between Fiscal Year 2026 and Fiscal Year 2029. Not only does MSEA call for an unfavorable report on this bill, MSEA continues our request for the complete elimination of the program.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Public dollars should fund public schools. The BOOST private school voucher program has been highly controversial since its inception and diverts attention and resources from the real needs of our students and public school communities.

This bill, as written, does not lay out the current minimum standards to participate in the program that have existed in budget language. These minimum nondiscrimination standards have already been difficult to enforce. The collective priority, if the vouchers are to continue in any way, should be looking for ways to strengthen those protections rather than looking for ways to increase support for schools without strict nondiscrimination policies. BOOST and other programs which send taxpayer dollars to private institutions have been a target for lawsuits and litigation that cost time and money of the Attorney General and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The State and education stakeholders (parents, students, educators) spent many years working to determine how we can increase standards for our students and educators through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Schools that participate in the BOOST voucher program do not have the same rigorous standards or accountability to legislators or taxpayers. They are not required to administer the same standards-based assessments, the certification requirements for their teachers are not comparable, and educators are not evaluated similarly, yet these schools are given public tax dollars. Public funding should go to public schools with high standards to serve ALL Maryland students.

MSEA strongly urges an Unfavorable Report on Senate Bill 552.

SB552 - Oppose.pdf

Uploaded by: Shamoyia Gardiner

Position: UNF



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of
Senate Bill 552: Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students**

Budget and Taxation Committee

Position: Unfavorable

February 7, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which calls for an equitable investment into the Maryland education system. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in strong opposition to Senate Bill 552**, which mandates funding increases for Maryland's private school voucher program. The bill proposes no dedicated revenue source for its FY 2026 through FY 2029 appropriations mandate, coinciding with the imminent depletion of the Blueprint Special Fund.

Despite commitments made to Maryland students through the codification of Chapter 36 and innovative funding approaches by the General Assembly and Administration, the future of the Blueprint Fund is currently in jeopardy. This committee must once again hold the line to ensure the Blueprint is implemented with fidelity while allocating funding sufficient for the out-year provisions of the law. BOOST is sufficiently funded in the current budget to serve existing students in the program—further allocations unnecessarily put public dollars behind private institutions.

The Department of Legislative Service's *own analysis* defines the impact of this bill at the local level: **Beginning as early as FY 2027, local school system revenues and local government expenditures for public schools may decrease.**

In passing the Blueprint, the General Assembly made a promise to future generations: that their public schools would be fully funded and among the best in the world. Full funding of the Blueprint is key to achieving this goal. We urge this committee to use the Legislative Session to focus its attention on innovative strategies to fund the Blueprint—like the Fair Share Maryland Act (SB766) and reject irresponsible efforts to distract the body from its generational commitment.

For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 552.

For more information, contact Shamoyia Gardiner
shamoyia@strongschoolsmaryland.org

SB552.Boost.24.pdf

Uploaded by: Virginia Crespo

Position: UNF



Maryland Retired School Personnel Association

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www.mrspa.org

Senate Bill 0552
In Opposition Of
Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
Budget and Taxation Committee
Hearing: February 7, 2024 – 2:00 p.m.

Dear Honorable Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair, and Honorable Senator Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chair, and distinguished Budget and Taxation Committee members,

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA) strongly opposes SB 0552 Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students.

We strongly oppose this legislation because we firmly believe that public funds should forward the goals of public, not private, education. The increase proposed in this bill will almost double the amount of current funding for this program. The original legislation passed with bi-partisan support. We cannot help but notice that this proposed legislation does not have that same kind of support.

The increase in money that is proposed in this bill to go towards the BOOST program can better be used by our public schools, which are tasked with providing a quality education to all students, not just the 3,250 students that benefited from the BOOST program last school year. Increasing support for public education helps promote the Maryland State Department of Education’s vision statement that says Maryland will have “a system of world-class schools.”

Maryland’s Constitution mandates a “free, fair, and adequate public education.” It does not mandate or even suggest that state funds be used to provide a private education.

On behalf of the 12,000 members of the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association, we urge opposition to SB 0552.

Sincerely,

Carla J. Duls
President

Virginia G. Crespo
Legislative Aide

EACtestimony.SB552.pdf

Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: INFO

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

SB 552: Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

February 7, 2024

Letter of Information

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC) is a coalition of nearly 40 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland. **We provide this letter of information to explain our concerns for students with disabilities in Maryland relative to funding for the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Program.** We take no position regarding the value of private schools.

Our position is solely based on the lack of access for students with significant disabilities.

- This bill requires public funding for scholarships for students to attend nonpublic schools. While often referred to as school choice because families can access state funds to pay tuition at private schools, **the reality for students with disabilities and their families is that this is not a choice at all.**

We are pleased that schools that explicitly discriminate against students with disabilities in their admissions policies no longer receive BOOST funds. However, schools receiving public funds are still able to engage in more subtle forms of discrimination in every aspect of the educational process - from admissions to classroom instruction to physical accessibility.

Parents who choose to send their children to private schools must be free to do so. However, public funds should not be used to assist attendance of children at those schools that do not provide equitable opportunities for children with and without disabilities to learn with and from each other.

Why do scholarship programs not meet the needs of students with significant disabilities?

- **Private schools do not have to accept everyone.** Private schools that do not receive federal funds are not required to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. **Private schools run by religious organizations are not required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).** The ADA ensures that students with disabilities have equal access and opportunity for participation in the programs, services and activities offered by the school.
- **Students with disabilities who attend private schools have to give up their rights and protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).** If parents of students with disabilities remove their children from the public school system to utilize the Program, their children would no longer be entitled to the special education and related services or procedural protections mandated by this federal special education law.
- **Scholarship programs divert funding from public schools.** If funding is diverted from public schools, less funding is available for services, supports, and other resources, including those that provide students with disabilities meaningful access. Students with disabilities are entitled to a free, appropriate public education with the services and supports needed to learn alongside their peers without disabilities. In order to ensure every student receives a high-quality education, including students with disabilities, funding should not be diverted away from public schools.

For more information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, co-chairperson, at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505.

Respectfully submitted,

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