



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

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BILL: HB 213
TITLE: Education - Maryland STEM Program - Established
DATE: January 31, 2024
POSITION: Oppose
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes** House Bill 213.

This bill establishes the Maryland STEM Program in the Maryland State Department to Education (MSDE) to provide additional compensation to a current or retired public school teacher to teach science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classes at nonpublic schools beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. Subject to availability of funds, MSDE must award grants that are at least equal to the number of hours the teacher teaches STEM classes at the nonpublic school multiplied by the average hourly salary of a public school teacher in the local school system multiplied by 1.25. A local school system may object to an employee's participation, and MSDE must reject the application if the objection is valid. For each fiscal year, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$1.0 million to MSDE for grants under the program.

PSSAM strongly opposes the establishment of any funding stream that financially benefits private and nonpublic schools. The financial needs of our public school students must take priority over those who choose a private or parochial education. Any educational initiatives funded using State or local taxpayer dollars should only be for public school students and staff.

While this legislation would financially benefit teachers and retired public school teachers, the legislation is flawed in a number of ideological and practical ways. The bill contemplates new funds diverted from public education, but also requires that local school systems participate in the administration of the program. The bill requires that the school systems are the conduit to pay participants (existing and retired teachers) for teaching in nonpublic schools that exist within the

boundaries of the LEA. However, the legislation is silent regarding any retirement or other employee-related compensation complications this might create. Local school systems must also notify *all current and retired teachers* from their system about the opportunity to participate in the program, and provide a list of interested candidates to any nonpublic school upon request. These administrative expectations are unreasonable and excessive alongside all of the existing responsibilities of the LEAs in the delivery of public education of taxpayer supported schools. Providing this level of support for private institutions is a serious departure from the State's constitutional mandate to provide a fair and equitable public education system.

For these reasons, PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 213 and urges an unfavorable committee report.