



Maryland Education Coalition



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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