

UNFAVORABLE
Senate Bill 673
Education – Maryland STEM Program - Established

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Budget & Taxation committee
March 5, 2025

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association respectfully opposes Senate Bill 673, which creates the Maryland STEM Program in the Maryland State Department of Education. This program intends to help bolster STEM education at private schools by compensating public school educators to teach STEM classes at private schools in their off-hours. The bill goes on to mandate an annual \$250,000 appropriation to support 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 over 40 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

While we appreciate the work of the sponsor to reach out and try to address our concerns, ultimately MSEA believes that public dollars should fund public schools and not off-set costs for private education. At a time when there are contemplated cuts to public schools that serve students who need the most supports – students from backgrounds of poverty, multilingual learners, and students in concentrated poverty – we do not believe the state should provide additional funding to private schools.

Additionally, as introduced, any school can participate in this program and can gain access to taxpayer funded teachers, no matter the school's tuition rate or endowment balance. Currently, for a school to participate in the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) voucher program and the Nonpublic Textbook Program, the school cannot charge more than \$21,023 for annual tuition. Moreover, the bill does not stipulate that participating schools have a nondiscrimination policy for students or staff.

Ultimately, this bill is unnecessary if the goal is to employ public school teachers in private schools as a second job. While MSEA's goal would be to make one job enough, we know that is not always the case and educators seek other employment. Teachers can already teach at a private school in their off hours from the public school. We are asking our public schools and MSDE to do so much already, it seems unnecessary to ask them to implement the administrative burdens in this bill as well.

MSEA respectfully urges an Unfavorable Report on Senate Bill 673.