



## **TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **SB 673 Education – Maryland STEM Program – Established**

**Position: Unfavorable**

**By: Linda T. Kohn, President**

**Date: March 5, 2025**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that supports policies which provide an equitable, adequate and quality education for all children, especially those who are underserved. LWVMD supports state funding to all public elementary and secondary schools at a sufficient level to eliminate inequities. Further, LWVMD opposes using public funding for nonpublic elementary and secondary schools. Therefore, LWVMD requests an unfavorable report on **HB673 Education – Maryland STEM program - Established** because the bill will shift funds from public to nonpublic schools.

**SB 673** proposes a mandated appropriation to establish the Maryland STEM Program in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) that will provide additional compensation to a current or retired public school educator who teaches STEM classes in nonpublic schools. Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, local schools would have to notify all current and retired teachers about the opportunity to participate. The Governor would include an appropriation of \$250,000 to fund the program, which would start on July 1, 2025.

The LWVMD recognizes the importance of Maryland remaining competitive in STEM education, an approach to teaching and learning that integrates the content and skills of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Nonetheless, LWVMD opposes the establishment of a funding stream that benefits private and nonpublic schools. Public dollars should fund public schools and not off-set costs for private education.

The LWVMD acknowledges that the Bill may benefit current teachers through the promise of extra income, and encourage retired teachers to rejoin the workforce. However, during the time that educators work at nonpublic schools, they would continue to be employees of public institutions, an arrangement that may have implications, as yet undetermined, for compensation and performance evaluation.

The LWVMD believes that public dollars should fund public schools, and not be used offset the cost of private education. Any educational initiatives using State or local taxpayer dollars should be for public school students and staff. Providing support for programs in nonpublic schools represents a departure the State's Constitutional mandate to establish and fund a thorough and efficient system of public education. In particular, the Bill's mandated appropriation to support nonpublic education is ill-timed when there are proposed budget cuts to funds needed to fulfill promise of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.\

**LWVMD opposes Senate Bill 673 and urges an unfavorable committee report.**