



February 25, 2026

Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Jheanelle Wilkins, Chair
The Honorable Jessica Feldmark, Vice Chair

HB 0455 – Education - Certification of Scholarship Granting Organizations (Opting in on Opportunity Act)

Position: Information Only

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today.

Teach MD is the Maryland division of Teach Coalition (a project of the Orthodox Union), advocating on behalf of over 30 Jewish schools enrolling nearly 9,000 students within the state.

Education is a critical foundation of Maryland’s success. When students thrive, families are stronger, communities prosper, and the state’s workforce is better prepared for tomorrow’s economy. Ensuring students thrive should be a central priority.

According to the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Assessment Results for the 2024-2025 school year, 50.8% of students are proficient in English Language Arts and 26.5% are proficient in mathematics.¹ In the last few years, Maryland has made measurable progress in student achievement, reflecting real effort by educators, families, and policymakers. At the same time, these results make clear that many students, particularly in mathematics, still need additional support to reach grade-level expectations.

The Maryland State Department of Education’s Strategic Plan 2025 acknowledges these challenges and outlines a path forward through Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness and Pillar 4: More Resources for Student Success.² Simply put, improving student achievement requires equipping students with the resources necessary for success. Students need targeted supports that meet their individual needs – whether those are tutoring, afterschool enrichment programs, technology access, or specialized services for students with disabilities.

We believe Maryland should opt into the new Federal Tax Credit Scholarship program. In doing so, the state would unlock a fully-federally funded revenue stream to support tutoring for students who are falling behind, enrichment for those who are excelling, test preparation for college placement exams, supplemental services for students with disabilities, and access to internet and computers for families facing financial hardship — all without drawing from Maryland’s education budget.

Expanding access to these supports can directly reinforce the State’s academic priorities and help accelerate gains in proficiency. At the same time, the program can reduce out-of-pocket expenses

¹ Maryland State Department of Education. (2025, August 26). *Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science assessment results, SY 2024–2025*.
<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2025/0826/Maryland-Comprehensive-Assessment-Program-MCAP-2024-2025-A.pdf>

² Maryland State Department of Education. (2025). *Strategic plan 2025*.

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2025/1209/Strategic-Plan-Update-A.pdf>

for families and districts. Because funding is generated through private donations incentivized by federal tax credits, new resources can flow to Maryland students without reducing existing state education funding.

And if Maryland does not opt in, Maryland taxpayers may still donate to organizations in other states, meaning the benefits of those federal tax credits would support students elsewhere rather than here at home.

While we support the intent of HB 0445, Teach MD does not believe that a statute is necessary for the state to opt in, or that we should impose additional administrative burdens or restraints onto the Maryland State Department of Education or the Comptroller.

We are confident the governor – who already has the power to opt in under federal law – will conclude that opting into the federal scholarship program is good for students, good for families, and good for the state.

Thank you.