



**Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 455  
Education - Certification of Scholarship Granting Organizations  
(Opting in on Opportunity Act)**

Ways and Means

February 26, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committee,

CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. With a membership of over 190,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. CASA provides multiple education services to youth and adult immigrants in Maryland including college and career readiness, workforce and life skills ESOL, and vocational training.

As a proud member of the Blueprint Coalition, CASA recognizes that one of the most critical responsibilities of the State is to provide free, public education to all children in Maryland. **CASA strongly opposes HB 455, Education - Certification of Scholarship Granting Organizations (Opting in on Opportunity Act)**, because it creates new public subsidies for private schools when it is the State's responsibility to preserve public dollars for the public good and adequately fund public education.

Maryland made a historic commitment through the Blueprint to fully and equitably fund public education. HB 455 seeks to move the State in the opposite direction by facilitating participation in a federal tax credit program that gives individuals a dollar-for-dollar tax write-off if they "donate" up to \$1,700 to organizations that give students money for private school tuition. While public schools will remain responsible for serving every child, regardless of need, disability status, language background, or income, HB 455 proposes to funnel billions of public dollars into private schools that are not held to the same accountability, access, or transparency standards.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future was designed to ensure equity and accountability in public education. House Bill 455 introduces a parallel structure that subsidizes private education without equivalent public accountability and without any requirement to serve all students. At a time when we are working to close achievement gaps and stabilize funding for high-need

students, Maryland should be reinforcing its commitment to public schools, not opening the door to policies that weaken that commitment.

Our state is already facing a tough road ahead for maintaining the public education funding that improves our schools and supports the needs of every student. We should preserve our limited public resources to support schools that are open to all.

**For these reasons, CASA respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on House Bill 455.**