



The Maryland Education Coalition is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.

House Bill 487 - Maryland Education Credit Ways and Means

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Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) members are organizations and individuals committed to improving public education in Maryland. Collectively, we represent about 200,000 parents, educators & community members and advocate for over 850,000 students statewide

MEC strongly opposes House Bill 487 - Maryland Education Credit.

This is a tax credit scheme and backdoor attempt to provide vouchers or scholarships for parents/guardians by subsidizing tuition at private and parochial schools, some of which have failed in recent years to independently sustain their enrollment and/or income required to operate their private or parochial institutions, operations and/or facilities.

MEC also believes this is an attempt for private and parochial schools or school systems to recruit and retain some of Maryland Public Schools brightest and most gifted students, artists and athletes away from public schools using Tuition Assistance or vouchers to offset cost of enrollment. This has allowed several well-known figures such as James Brown, Kevin Durant, Victor Oladipo and Brian Westbrook to attend private/parochial schools instead of “free” public schools in their communities.

MEC also opposes any effort “requiring the Department of Business and Economic Development to administer the tax credit, adopt certain regulations; requiring the Department to approve certain applications” certify or otherwise oversee or administer programs that may benefit any private or parochial education institution that educates Pre-K through Grade 12 students.

This responsibility must be administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) with oversight by the Maryland State Board of Education. Private or parochial institutions also must provide funds for MSDE to administer such programs unless prohibited by law or regulations.

This bill if approved also would allow qualified, wealthy business entities to request a Tax Credit up to \$200,000 and place it temporarily in Maryland’s Reserve Fund. This special fund could be reallocated to private/parochial schools up to \$15 million a year with less oversight over how such funds are spent.

MEC believes that this \$15 million should be reallocated to public schools to improve their aging facilities. For example, \$15 million is the amount estimated to ensure that every high school in Prince George’s has safe, athletic fields in order to compete more safely and with more quality with other public, private and/or parochial schools, benefiting many more public school students and the school communities athletic programs. Baltimore County could use \$15 million to ensure all public school facilities have modern Air Condition. Baltimore City and Montgomery County could modernize some of their older facilities.



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MEC is also concerned with the proposal to require such institutions to administer an “achievement test”, because it does not clearly define what that means nor whether it would provide comparable data that will allow MSDE or the public to determine if students are provided a quality education or performing at acceptable levels.

MEC also supports all public school students regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, age, physical and academic ability, and sexual orientation. This legislation will not ensure that all students who apply or who enroll in eligible education institutions will not be discriminated against.

It also does not ensure that students with Special Needs (i.e., Special Education, ESOL/ELL or even Gifted & Talented) will be provided qualified education professionals and/or support services required for them to succeed academically, socially or emotionally.

Therefore, we urge the Maryland General Assembly to vote report unfavorably on **SB 405** and work with MEC and our partners to:

- Secure the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) by making it a compulsory part of statutory funding obligations.
- Raise the school construction funding floor & increase support for improving the public school buildings, concentrating on areas of greatest need.