



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.

SENATE BILL 405 Maryland Education Credit Budget and Taxation - Hearing 2/25 at 1:00 p.m.

Board of Directors:

Rick Tyler, Co-Chair
Bebe Verdery, Co-Chair
Charlie Cooper, Secretary
Advocates for Children and Youth
American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland
Maryland Disability Law Center
Maryland PTA
Carl Stokes, Individual Member
Sharon Rubinstein, Individual Member

Organizational Members

ABC Schools
Arts Education in Maryland Schools
Casa de Maryland
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Public Justice Center

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 in over 950 public schools.

MEC strongly opposes SB 405 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

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 public officials, athletes and business leaders and their families to attend private/parochial schools instead of public schools in their communities. This also may promote an appearance of exclusiveness, not inclusiveness.

MEC also opposes any effort “requiring the Department of Business and Economic Development to administer the tax credit, 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. A special fund could be reallocated to private/parochial schools up to \$15 million a year with little oversight over how public funds are spent.

MEC believes that the \$15 million, if found, should remain in the Transportation Trust Fund to repair the two (2) dozen unsafe bridges across the state or be reallocated to public schools to:

- ensure that every high school in Prince George’s has safe, athletic fields, benefiting many more public school students and the school communities
- Baltimore County to ensure all public schools have Air Conditioning.
- Baltimore City and Montgomery County to modernize aging facilities.
- Howard County could eliminate various health concerns in their facilities

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



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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 will be provided qualified education professionals, instructional resources and/or support services required for them to succeed academically, socially or emotionally. **This would allow many of these private/parochial schools to maintain a separate, but not equal admission and retention policies,** because they can choose which students to admit or remove at will with limited options or support services for the students or their families.

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

- Fully Fund all public schools based on current laws and policies
- Secure the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) by making it a compulsory part of statutory funding obligations and fully fund it
- Raise the public school construction funding floor & increase support for improving the public school buildings, concentrating on areas of greatest need.

Respectfully yours,

Bebe Verdery, Co-Chair **Rick Tyler Co-Chair**
Maryland Education Coalition
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