



---

BILL: House Bill 665  
TITLE: Education - Public Charter Schools - Virtual Learning Programs  
DATE: February 10, 2021  
POSITION: Oppose  
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means  
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

---

This bill alters the definition of “public charter school” to include a virtual learning program which would provide a significant portion of its curriculum and instruction through the internet, taught by teachers who have the same required certifications as professional staff of other public schools.

The Public Schools Superintendents’ Association of Maryland (PSSAM), representing all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes House Bill 665.**

The Covid-19 pandemic has created many challenges in the delivery of public education. However, it has highlighted the value and potential of virtual learning. There is no doubt that virtual learning will continue as a component of public education, well past the end of this pandemic. As the state’s top educators, we welcome virtual learning as a supplement to the high-quality education already provided in Maryland schools. However, expanding the definition of “public charter school” to include a virtual learning plan is not necessary. Local school systems are already providing appropriate virtual learning opportunities and can authorize public charter schools to do so under existing law.

While we applaud the success of our current public charter school model, we oppose any expansion at this time and diversion of public funding to a third-party provider. Local school systems would be responsible to direct funding towards the virtual public charter schools, which would limit the ability to fund and expand virtual learning initiatives that are already in place. While there may be a role for some outside collaboration with well-tested companies as we build these models, we want the chance to cultivate our existing virtual schools as part of the public school system, not create an exodus to private and non-public schools by allowing them to operate as charter schools.

PSSAM continues to support local and state efforts to implement virtual learning initiatives, although, we oppose the proposal to significantly revise the definition of “public charter school” as the current law as written ensures the authorization and operation of high-quality public charter schools in the state.

For these reasons, PSSAM requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 665.

---

*One Voice, One Vision for Maryland’s Students*

---