



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
P.O. Box 12040
Baltimore, Md 21281
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

Bill: SB 401 - Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students
Date: February 9, 2022
Position: Unfavorable
Committee: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Contact: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director

This legislation requires the Governor to fund scholarships for students participating in the Broadening Options and Opportunity for Students and Teachers (BOOST) Program. These scholarships are for students who are eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program who attend a nonpublic school. The legislation mandates funding beginning in FY '24 of \$10 million, \$12 million in FY '25, \$14 million in FY '26, and \$16 million in FY '27 and each fiscal year thereafter.

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), representing all twenty-four local school superintendents, **opposes SB 401**.

This bill's purpose is to create a permanent funding stream to finance private and parochial school students at the expense of public-school students. This diversion of state revenue to finance private school student expenses, including tuition, constitutes a voucher-like program long opposed by PSSAM and public education advocates in Maryland.

Unlike nonpublic and private schools, with the exception of nonpublic special education schools, Maryland public schools are held strictly accountable by local, State, and federal laws and regulations such as teacher education and certification, academic standards, and anti-discrimination laws. Local superintendents fully recognize that strong accountability measures for Maryland's 900,000 public school students translates into strong accountability for public dollars invested in education. In addition, it is important to note that public schools provide effective educational programs for all students, including special education, English language learners, early childhood, and rigorous high school programs that are not always available in parochial and private schools.

PSSAM strongly opposes the establishment of a permanent funding stream that would ultimately finance private schools. The financial needs of our public-school students must take priority over those who choose a private or parochial education.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES SB 401** and requests an **unfavorable** committee report.

One Voice, One Vision for Maryland's Students