

REJECTING BOAST AND NEO-VOUCHER PROGRAMS



Gov. Hogan's education priorities: cut public education by \$600 million over the next four years; give private schools \$30 million over the next three years.



After all the progress Maryland public schools have made, diverting public dollars to private schools would send our state in the wrong direction. Gov. Hogan's BOAST bill would do exactly that—while exacerbating educational inequities and putting taxpayer dollars at risk of fraud, waste, and abuse in the process.

Pennsylvania—whose voucher tax credit program is a model for the BOAST bill—spends more than \$80 million a year to subsidize private schools.

What is the BOAST bill?

BOAST is a voucher scheme that would shift public, taxpayer dollars into private schools. It has been introduced in various forms since 2006, but has been rejected by the General Assembly every time.

Gov. Hogan's proposal would give tax credits to corporations for contributions made to private schools. The credits would amount to 60% of the contribution and up to \$200,000 a year. The end result: General Fund revenues would be reduced, while millions of taxpayer dollars are diverted to private schools to subsidize the cost of education for a few students.

BOAST would subsidize private education for the few—at the expense of public school students.

Any education dollars spent outside of improving our public schools challenges our ability to make the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for all students.

After cutting public school funding by \$144 million in FY16 and an estimated \$600 million over the next four years, Gov. Hogan's BOAST bill would funnel increasing amounts of taxpayer dollars to private schools. His plan would allocate \$5 million in its first year, \$10 million in its second, and \$15 million in its third. Such a trend mimics similar plans in other states. Maryland's 2012 Interim Study Report on BOAST found that "the growth of tuition tax credits in other states indicates that if BOAST were enacted to replicate these programs, the loss to the General Fund would be at a minimum \$50 million."

\$ BOAST ABANDONS THORNTON — MARYLAND’S HISTORIC EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA

Wisconsin taxpayers have paid **\$139 million** over the **last 10 years** to private schools that were since barred from the state’s voucher system for failing to meet requirements related to finances, accreditation, student safety, and auditing.

| | Public Schools | Private Schools |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| SCHOOL FUNDING BASED ON: | | |
| Enrollment | ✓ | X |
| Number of Students in poverty | ✓ | X |
| Number of Students in Special Ed | ✓ | X |
| Local Wealth | ✓ | X |
| SCHOOL IS ACCOUNTABLE FOR: | | |
| Student performance | ✓ | X |
| Teacher qualification | ✓ | X |
| Curriculum taught | ✓ | X |
| Discrimination | ✓ | X |

BOAST would benefit students from affluent families, not low-income children.

The tuition assistance that comes from these programs rarely covers anywhere near the full cost of attendance at private schools. Studies in states with similar programs have found that these publicly funded scholarships merely make it easier for wealthy families to send their children to private school.

The vast majority of tax credit voucher recipients are already enrolled in private school. For example, a recent report by the Southern Education Foundation found that most of the students receiving tax credit vouchers through a similar system in Georgia did not come from public schools. From 2007, the year before the program was enacted, through 2009, private school enrollment increased by only one-third of one percent in the metropolitan counties that included most of the private schools in the scholarship program.

BOAST would lack even minimal levels of fiscal accountability for public tax dollars, and provides no protections from discriminating against certain students.

Private schools that would benefit from a tuition tax credit program are not accountable to the public in the way that public schools are for teacher quality, student achievement, attendance, entrance policies, graduation and dropout rates, and other critical standards.

A Keystone Research Center study of Pennsylvania’s voucher tax credit program concluded that schools are not required to report on children’s progress or document school quality, and the state does no review to ensure that the money went where it was intended. Similarly, Gov. Hogan’s bill includes no such accountability requirements.

The BOAST bill—which includes no mechanism to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of public money—would even allow private scholarship organizations to keep as much as 10% of taxpayer dollars to cover their own expenses.

In other states, private schools benefitting from similar tax credit voucher programs have been allowed to discriminate against certain students. At least 115 schools in Georgia’s program have anti-LGBT policies and practices in place. Public dollars should not be subsidizing discrimination based on sexual orientation—but Gov. Hogan’s legislation does nothing to prevent that practice in Maryland.

Using taxpayer dollars to fund private schools for the few, especially while cutting funding for public schools that benefit all students, is a proposition that Maryland students cannot afford and that should be flatly rejected by the General Assembly. The BOAST bills (HB 487/SB 405) should receive unfavorable reports.



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