



# Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

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DATE: March 18, 2021

BILL: SB0941

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Virtual  
Schools – Alterations

POSITION – STRONGLY OPPOSE

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) has been in existence for over 40 years and is made up of 20 statewide organizations & several individuals who represent parents, civil rights, & special population groups including lower income, special needs, limited English, Gifted & Talented and people of color. We advocate for adequate, equitable funding and systematic accountability for the estimated 900,000 public school students in Maryland’s public schools regardless of their academic, cultural, economic, geographic, racial, or other demographic status.

MEC strongly opposes SB 941- Primary and Secondary Education – Virtual Schools – Alterations. If approved, this bill would exempt virtual schools defined in this bill from several important provisions of law required of public schools in the State of Maryland including some required by Charter Schools. Approving virtual schools as defined in this bill would also create a school program using public dollars that more closely resembles nonpublic and homeschool programs without clear non-discrimination policies, transparency, comparable student performance data, and detail accountability reports in the use of all public dollars.

MEC and many of its partners and friends supports adequate, equitable investment of public money for public and approved private special needs schools only - essential for teaching the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for our children to be contributing members in our communities, without discrimination. MEC opposes the use of any public operating or capital funds for vouchers, tax credits, or tax subsidies for all other non-public, private, parochial, or home schools.

In summary, MEC wants to be clear that we do not oppose nonpublic or home schools and respects such choices by parents or guardians. However, most of these schools fail or refuse to provide transparent, clear data of admission, enrollment, discrimination, academic performance, or financial status. In addition, the recently passed American Rescue Plan allocated over \$49 million dollars specifically for nonpublic schools and although we also oppose this action also, nonpublic schools may be able to use these additional funds for such programs.

In closing, Maryland Public Schools already have the ability and now some experience with virtual education under current policies and if anything, existing polices may need strengthening and not weakening.

Therefore, we request an unfavorable report for SB941- Primary and Secondary Education – Virtual Schools – Alterations.

Respectfully yours,  
Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

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Advocates for Children and Youth, American Civil Liberties Union of MD, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Arts Every Day, Attendance Works, CASA, Decoding Dyslexia of MD, Disability Rights MD, League of Women Voters of MD, Let Them See Clearly, MSC-NAACP, Maryland PTA, Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, Maryland Coalition for Gifted & Talented Ed, Maryland Out of School Time Network, Public Justice Center, Maryland School Psychologists' Association, Parent Advocacy Consortium, Right to Read MD, School Social Workers of MD, Barbara Dezmon, Kalam Hettleman, David Hornbeck, Rick Tyler, Jr., Shamoyia Gardiner, Sharon Rubinstein

