

**Written testimony submitted for the record by the American Federation of Teachers-Maryland  
Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
SB 401 – Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students  
OPPOSE**

Good afternoon, Chair Guzzone and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. On behalf of the 20,000 members of the AFT-Maryland, including the teachers and educational professionals of the Baltimore Teachers Union, we call for an unfavorable report to SB 401, the bill that would require future Governor's to include in the budget increased funding for the Maryland school voucher program known as BOOST.

It is deeply troubling to the members of the AFT-Maryland that, while city schools have had a crumbling infrastructure (including broken HVACs, as has been highlighted recently in the news) *for years*, and while state funding to public schools has not met expectations since the great recession, the state somehow finds the revenues needed to fund a wasteful and discriminatory program that diverts public tax dollars to private schools. Incredibly, while Governor Hogan cuts what he believes to be at his discretion vital funding to Baltimore City Public Schools to the tune of almost \$100 million—in a year with unprecedented budget surpluses—he would tie future Governor's hands to syphon public funding off to a wasteful and discriminatory private school voucher program that has not demonstrated to improve educational outcomes for Maryland's students.

The BOOST program itself has a long history of not meeting expectations; the program has in the past failed to “broaden” opportunities for Baltimore City School children, as 75% of the voucher scholarships have gone to students who were attending that private school before the program began. In addition, it has been revealed that a number of religious schools receiving public funds through this voucher program have built discriminatory practices into their school policies. For example, at least four BOOST schools have state policies reserving the right to not admit or expel a student if her or his parents are in a same-sex marriage, or who are found to be “living in, condoning, or practicing alternative gender identity.” Finally, no evidence has ever been produced to show that a student attending a private school on a BOOST scholarship will have a higher academic achievement rate than her or his peer attending a public school. In fact, a 2017 study done by the Economic Policy Institute found “limited improvements *at best* in student achievement and school district performance from even large scale programs. In the few cases where test scores increased, other factors, namely increased public accountability, not private school competition, seem to be more likely drivers.”

The AFT-Maryland again calls for an unfavorable report to SB 401.