



Advocates for Children and Youth is a statewide non-partisan non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. Our multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live.

**HB 453**  
**Maryland Education Credit**

House Ways and Means Committee  
March 7, 2016

Position: **OPPOSED**

Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) is committed to supporting educational opportunities for children in Maryland, and that means fully funding public education. ACY cannot support the siphoning of public funds away from public schools when many school systems in Maryland do not have sufficient resources to provide every student the adequate education guaranteed by the Maryland Constitution. Therefore, ACY once again is **opposed** to the Maryland Education Credit, HB 453.

The Maryland Constitution guarantees an adequate public education, an education that school systems increasingly lack the resources to provide. It is illogical to funnel taxpayer dollars toward private rather than public education at a time when Maryland's school systems are in financial crisis. Moreover, given that the final report on the Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education (Adequacy Study) is due December 1, 2016, now is not the appropriate time to make such a drastic change. The Maryland General Assembly should ensure adequate and equitable funding for public education before diverting funds elsewhere.

This legislation would provide tax credits to businesses that contribute money to benefit non-public schools. These tax credits would be taken from the General Fund, money which otherwise would have been available to support our public schools struggling to maintain facilities, teacher jobs, and course offerings. This tax credit benefits only a small number of families across the state; taxpayer dollars should instead be spent on public schools that are available to all children.

The Maryland Education Credit not only uses taxpayer dollars to subsidize the education of few children at tuition-charging schools, but it does so without clear oversight of the funds. Unlike public schools, private schools are not accountable to the public for such standards as teacher quality, student achievement, attendance, entrance policies, equality in discipline practices, and dropout rates. Private schools do not adhere to all federal and state provisions requiring adequate services for students with disabilities and are not subject to the same civil rights laws that protect public school teachers and students from discriminatory practices.

In the coming years, the Maryland General Assembly will be asked to implement legislation in response to the findings of the Adequacy Study that will prepare students to be successful in the 21st century. The first priority of the State should be to ensure our children have the adequate public education that they are constitutionally guaranteed by reviewing and implementing changes recommended by the Adequacy Study. General Funds should not be used to support nonpublic schools until all public systems have sufficient resources to provide all students the adequate and equitable educations they deserve.

For these reasons, we urge an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 453.