

10 **A RESOLUTION CONCERNING**
20 **ALLOWING A SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE OF MARYLAND**

30 **WHEREAS:** School choice is the slogan of a U.S movement to give parents more say in which
40 primary and secondary schools their children attend; and,

50 **WHEREAS:** The movement hopes that increased choice will cause more fierce competition between
60 different schools, and thereby raise the overall quality of education; and,

70 **WHEREAS:** The idea behind school choice is to allow parents the option of either spending vouchers
80 at a (possibly parochial) private school or of obtaining tax credits for the same; and,

90 **WHEREAS:** Usually, public schools will not receive funding for those pupils whose parents did not
100 choose to attend the designated public school chosen by the government; and,

110 **WHEREAS:** The concept behind the idea of school choice is that if parents were given a choice about
120 where public money should go, they would pick the better schools and the under
130 performing schools would have to improve or lose public funding; and,

140 **WHEREAS:** Additionally, school choice is a good way to improve public education at low cost, by
150 forcing schools to perform more efficiently; and,

160 **WHEREAS:** Another argument is based on cost-effectiveness, for example, Moe and the CATO
170 institute cite public statistics for the U.S. costs and quality of education that show private
180 education usually costs between one quarter and one half of public education while
190 giving superior outcomes; and,

200 **WHEREAS:** Boston schools spend \$7,300 per enrollee each year, Washington D.C. \$9,500 per
210 enrollee, and New York City, \$7,350 per enrollee and these figures are larger than all but
220 the most expensive private schools; and,

230 **WHEREAS:** In areas with these expenditures, many public schools are unaccredited, while private
240 schools are fully accredited in order to retain students, avoid regulatory difficulties, and
250 in many large public school districts, administrators do not publicize accreditation for this
260 reason; and,

270 **WHEREAS:** Due to the expanded market and subsequent demand for private schooling, a myriad of
280 schools of varying selectivity and philosophies would arise to meet this demand,
290 providing greater choice than the public school system; and,

300 **WHEREAS:** The decentralization or localization of power endemic to private schooling would
310 facilitate greater parent teacher interaction, as the teachers would be accountable to
320 parents, not to a distant city or state board; and,

330 **WHEREAS:** A close-knit community of students, parents, and faculty unified by a common ideal
340 would promote involvement among the relevant parties; and,

350 **WHEREAS:** Effectively, proponents of school choice argue, vouchers would confer the benefits of
360 private schooling on a wide swath of the population while lessening, or even negating the
370 cost; and,

380 **WHEREAS:** In *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 536 U.S. 639 (2002), the Supreme Court of the United
390 States held that school vouchers could be used to pay for education in sectarian schools
400 without violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. As a result, states

410 are basically free to enact voucher programs that provide funding for any school of the
420 parent's choosing; and,

430 **WHEREAS:** The French Government subsidizes most private primary and secondary schools,
440 including those affiliated with religious denominations, under contracts stipulating that
450 education much follow the same curriculum as public schools and that schools cannot
460 discriminate on grounds of religion or force pupils to attend religion classes; and,

470 **WHEREAS:** This system of *école libre* (Free Schooling) is mostly used not for religious reasons, but
480 for practical reasons (private schools may offer more services, such as after-class
490 tutoring) as well as the desire of parents living in disenfranchised areas to send their
500 children away from the local schools, where they perceive that the youth are too prone to
510 delinquency or have too many difficulties keeping up with schooling requirements that
520 the educational content is bound to suffer and the threatened repealing of that status in the
530 1980's triggered mass street demonstrations in favor of the status; and,

540 **WHEREAS:** Voucher systems for primary schools have also quietly operated in some New Hampshire
550 school districts since education became mandatory in the 19th Century; and,

560 **WHEREAS:** In addition, in 2003 the Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed a
570 voucher plan for public schools in the District of Columbia and Mayor Anthony Williams
580 (D) has signaled his support for this plan; and,

590 **WHEREAS:** In Chile, there is a voucher system in which the state pays private schools directly, based
600 on average attendance. These schools show consistently better results in standardized
610 testing than public schools, with 35% of all students attending such schools.

620 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the Maryland General
630 Assembly to pass legislation supporting a school-choice program for all parents of
640 Maryland Public School pupils; and,

650 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That the Maryland Student Legislature urges Governor Ehrlich to
660 endorse, lobby for, and sign any legislation promoting school-choice in Maryland.

670 **MANDATES:** Governor Robert Ehrlich
680 Lt. Governor Michael Steele
690 Senate President Michael Miller
700 House Speaker Michael Busch
710 Mayor Anthony Williams
720 Secretary Margaret Spellings

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