Melinda Swagger

From: Tamaya Browder <tbrowder@wvpolicy.org>
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 10:47 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Testimony Submission for SB 914
Attachments: T.Browder WVCBP SB 914 Testimony .docx

Hello, I would like to present live testimony on SB 914 during today's committee meeting. My testimony is below and attached for your records.

Testimony from:

Tamaya Browder, Education Policy Fellow, West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

Testimony in opposition to SB 914

April 4, 2024

West Virginia House Education Committee

Chairman Ellington and members of the committee,

My name is Tamaya Browder, and I am an education policy fellow with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, which is an independent, non-profit policy research organization. Our vision is for a West Virginia where everyone has a meaningful opportunity to thrive with equitable access to healthcare, education, jobs, housing, and safe communities. In pursuit of this vision, I am glad to provide my testimony to the committee regarding our concerns about SB 914.

SB 914 weakens accountability measures for private, parochial, and religious schools in our state by modifying instructional term requirements and removing requirements for student testing and assessment. The bill removes the requirement for these non-public schools to furnish composite results to the state and limits access to this information to parents or legal guardians of current and prospective students. By removing the requirement for non-public schools to report their test results to the state, this bill essentially removes the only accountability measure for children that attend a non-public school and receive Hope Scholarship funding other than attendance. Not only would this action result in Hope Scholarship students at non-public schools being held to a different standard compared to public schools, but it would also result in different standards for Hope Scholarship students at non-public schools compared to those following an individualized instructional plan pathway in home school or microschool settings as these students would still be required to submit annual assessments.

The standards and accountability measures imposed on public schools are there to promote equal access to high-quality education. This bill further weakens the accountability measures for non-public schools by removing requirements for non-public schools to maintain student performance above a certain level (i.e., the 40th percentile) and to initiate remedial measures when performance is below that level. Studies across several states including Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, and Washington, D.C. show mixed or negative results on achievement for students who utilize voucher programs, like the Hope Scholarship, to attend non-public schools , . Researchers proposed several factors that impacted student achievement, and instructional time was determined to be the most likely cause. Private schools typically offer less instructional time than public schools and more instructional time is linked to higher

student achievement , . This furthers the need for continued accountability measures regarding instructional time, student testing and assessment performance, and reporting for non-public schools, particularly when these schools are eligible to receive public funds via the Hope Scholarship.

Non-public schools that receive public funding should be held to the same standard as public schools. Last year, about 7 in 10 dollars disbursed through the Hope Scholarship went to non-public schools in the state . This amounted to more than $16 million in public funds and this could grow to more than $100 million next school year and more than $300 million in 2026. More than half of the non-public schools in our state that received Hope Scholarship funds weren't accredited. Accreditation aims to ensure standards of professional instruction, curriculum, school environment, financial stability, and achievement . Currently unaccredited non-public schools in our state are not required to have licensed or credentialed personnel and many already are not required to report on student testing and assessment.

Non-public schools in our state already have broad autonomy in how they operate including the students that they admit, and what and how students are taught. While these schools operate separately from the public education system, they should be subject to the same academic standards as they receive public funds and are as such accountable to the state and the public at large. To preserve public accountability for public funds and to protect quality education in our state, I urge the committee to vote against SB 914.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tamaya Browder

Education Policy Fellow

West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

National Education Association, "Vouchers," December 2, 2021,

Ulrich Boser, Meg Benner and Erin Roth, "The Highly Negative Impacts of Vouchers" Center for American Progress, March 20, 2018,

Julian Betts, Mark Dynarski, and Jill Feldman, "Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Features of Schools in DC," Institute of Education Sciences, August 2016,

David A. Farbman, "The Case for Improving Expanding Time in School: A Review of Key Research and Practice," National Center on Time and Learning, February 2015,

Tamaya Browder, "The Perfect Storm: Limited Oversight and Accountability Contribute to Growing Costs of the Hope Scholarship," West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, February 2025.

West Virginia Department of Education, "Accreditation vs. Registration,"

Tamaya Browder
she/her
Education Policy Fellow
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Melinda Swagger

From: Public Comments
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 9:33 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Public Comments on SB 914

Contact Info: name - Christina Baisden, email - christinabaisden459@yahoo.com, phone number - (681) 220-2869, org - , zip-code - 25801

Date of Submission: 04/04/2025

Members of this Commitee,

I am greatly concerned about SB-914 and the lasting impacts it would have on our already dysfunctional school system. In regards to our tax dollars via the Hope Scholarship EVERY school including private schools should be held to the same standards of public schools. If parents do not want to adhere to public guidelines they are welcome to seek out other alternatives but not at the cost of taxpayers.

Standardized testing is a "finger on the pulse" of education and what our children have learned that will carry them through life. We need to make sure we are doing everything in our power to set these children up for success. The foundation of that success is a proper education. We can not be sure what these children are learning if this testing is allowed to be eliminated.

I strongly urge you to put this bill aside and not allow it to pass out of committee doe these reasons. Thank you for your time.

Best,

Christina Baisden

Melinda Swagger

From: Public Comments
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 9:31 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Public Comments on SB 914

Contact Info: name - Rebekah Aranda, email - aranda05@yahoo.com, phone number - (832) 527-8504, org - , zip-code - 26501

Date of Submission: 04/04/2025

SB914 unnecessarily loosens rules that ensure private schools are providing adequate education to WV students. Given that private schools receive state funding via the Hope Scholarship it would behoove the state to ensure minimum standards on instructional days and testing are upheld. Please vote no on Sb 914

Sincerely,

Bekah Aranda

Melinda Swagger

From: Sarah Harris <phoenixconsultingwv@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 9:17 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Senate Bill 914

Good morning,

I am writing in opposition to removing reporting requirements for private schools, as proposed in SB 914. My kids have been to public, private, micro, and homeschooled, and I value choice. However, there should be a level of oversight when it comes to leading and teaching the hearts and minds of young children. I'm not sure why we are trying to kill one form of education in favor of another- and why both are being held to different standards when they both receive our hard earned tax dollars.

I feel strongly that SB 914 has the potential to put young minds, and lives, at risk. I would like for you to oppose this legislation, and require equal reporting standards from all K-12 education in WV.

Thank you,
Sarah Harris
Hurricane, WV 25526

Melinda Swagger

From: Public Comments
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 7:31 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Public Comments on SB 914

Contact Info: name - Emilee Blosser, email - Emileeblosser@yahoo.com, phone number - (304) 531-4577, org - , zip-code - 25276

Date of Submission: 04/04/2025

Private schools must be held to the same standards as public. Standardized tests and same length of the school year should be required for both. This is only fair if both receive public funding.

Melinda Swagger

From: Public Comments
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 7:19 AM
To: House Education
Subject: Public Comments on SB 914

Contact Info: name - Monty Fowler, email - monty@mffowler.net, phone number - , org - , zip-code - 25705

Date of Submission: 04/04/2025

This is a bad bill because it allows private and home schools to have laxer standards than public schools. If people are getting public dollars to educate their children, the children should have to go to school the same number of days, have to take the same standardized tests and submit those testing results for public review. There must be accountability, otherwise this bill is nothing more than a giveaway of public dollars to a dubious cause.

Melinda Swagger

From: Public Comments
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 7:54 PM
To: House Education
Subject: Public Comments on SB 914

Contact Info: name - Sarah Duncan, email - slogan1984@gmail.com, phone number - , org - , zip-code - 25270

Date of Submission: 04/03/2025

If private schools are receiving public tax dollars, they should be held to the same standards as public schools. Frequently, private school students are very behind their public school peers in terms of the amount of content and mastery of content covered when they re-enroll in public schools. Offering less than 180 days of instruction (I believe the current version of the bill only comes out to 160 days, with 5 hours per day?) and not requiring private schools to submit their standardized test score results is inappropriate and simply lowering standards.

Melinda Swagger

From: Roz Eiler <rozeiler@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 7:24 PM
To: House Education
Subject: Don't support SB 914

Private schools should have the same requirements as public schools if they are receiving taxpayer funds.
Please, please vote NO on SB 914

Sent from my iPhone & Gmail