



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 157

PUBLIC SCHOOLS – APPROPRIATIONS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY EXPENDITURES – INCREASE (SCHOOL SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2024)

JANUARY 30, 2024

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Maryland CAPE is our state’s chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of roughly 120,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

We issue this testimony in support, with amendments, of House Bill 157.

The safety of schools and students in Maryland is indisputably of paramount importance. House Bill 157 increases the annual Safe Schools Fund appropriation for the purpose of improving school safety.

Safety concerns affect nonpublic schools certainly no less than they affect public schools. In past years, approximately two hundred schools annually participated in the Nonpublic School Safety Grant Program, which provided a \$3.5 million allocation for the security improvements of nonpublic schools specifically for school. Schools utilized the funding for safety improvements such as auto-locking security doors, locking hardware, security systems with video capabilities, locking safety windows and safety lighting. Many of the schools with lower-income student enrollments would not have been able to complete the security upgrades without this funding. For the current Fiscal Year 2024, no funding was made available for the Nonpublic School Security Improvement Grant.

If protecting Maryland students is a constant concern, it is all the more important in these charged and sometimes-dangerous times. We therefore respectfully request a renewal of the \$3.5 million appropriation for the Nonpublic School Safety Grant, per the amendment below.

We thank the State of Maryland for its partnerships with our nonpublic schools in securing a safe and secure environment for our children to learn in. Maryland’s nonpublic school community requests that this committee please adopt the amendment below, and issue a favorable report on House Bill 157 as amended.

Amendment No. 1

Article – Education

7-1513. Nonpublic School Safety Improvement Grant Program

- (A) There is a Nonpublic School Safety Improvement Grant Program.
- (B) The purpose of the Fund is to provide grants to nonpublic schools in the state to enhance school safety.
- (C) Beginning in fiscal year 2025 and each fiscal year thereafter, the governor shall provide at least \$3,500,000 to nonpublic schools that were eligible to participate in the Aid to Non–Public Schools R00A03.04 (for the purchase of textbooks or computer hardware and software for loans to students in eligible nonpublic schools) during the preceding school year or nonpublic schools that serve students with disabilities through the Non–Public Placement Program R00A02.07 Subprogram
- (D) Nonpublic schools participating in the Nonpublic School Safety Improvement Grant Program shall receive a maximum amount of \$65 per eligible nonpublic school student for participating schools, except that at schools where at least 20% of the students are eligible for the free or reduced–price meal program or for schools that service students with disabilities through the Non–Public Placement Program, there shall be a distribution of \$85 per student, and no individual school may receive less than \$5,000.