



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 18, 2026

HB 534

Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt

**House Ways & Means Committee
Position: UNFAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in opposition to House Bill 534. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

House Bill 534 would prohibit nonpublic schools from withholding transcripts from parents for unpaid tuition. Under this bill, where a parent has breached their legally binding tuition contract, a school may no longer condition the release of a transcript on payment in fulfillment of that legally binding contract, despite the parents having freely agreed to it.

Many nonpublic schools rely almost entirely on tuition to keep teachers paid, lights and heat on, and high-quality curriculum materials in the classrooms, just to name a few basic expenditures. Thus, nonpublic schools must form a contractual agreement with parents and guardians to ensure that there is recourse if tuition is not paid. Part of that agreement is that transcripts may be withheld for nonpayment of tuition, so as to incentivize parents who might leave a nonpublic school community to ensure that financial agreement obligations are paid before moving on to another school. **Very often, parents will leave tuition unpaid and then jettison to another private school for various reasons, only to go pay tuition at the next school.** They often have the means to pay, but instead leave their previous school without the income administrators budgeted to pay teachers, maintenance, utilities and materials. Thus, this only avenue of recourse is dire for schools, many of which operate on very thin budgets.

As there are 138,000+ nonpublic school students in Maryland, this legislation is likely to result in an increased strain on Maryland courts by forcing schools to initiate collections actions and litigation. **Currently, the ability to withhold transcripts often results in payment or settlement agreements, thus peaceably resolving the situation.** The state should not impede free, fair and willing contractual obligations entered into by its citizens. It is for these reasons that we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 534.