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## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

### Senate Bill 401 Operating Budget - Funding - Scholarships for Nonpublic School Students

### Budget and Taxation Committee -February 9, 2022 Support

**Background:** The Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) program would give low income students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Meals (FARMS) program the opportunity to apply for tuition scholarships enabling them to attend the school best suited to their needs. The bill requires the Governor to allocate in the annual operating budget funding for the program, which incrementally would increase from \$10 million in FY24 to \$16 million in FY27 and each fiscal year after.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council, an agency of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, supports excellence in education. While the vibrancy of public schools in Maryland is a top priority, we understand that public school is not the right choice for all Maryland families. Baltimore area Jewish day schools educate more than 8,000 students. For much of the Jewish community, a Jewish day school education is not a choice, it is a necessity.

Many of the Jewish schools in our community serve a population that is 20%-40% FARMS eligible. Our schools strive to keep tuition as low as possible, but must still cover their operating costs. The BOOST program has helped over 2000 low-income Jewish children attend the school that is best for them. Codifying funding for non public school scholarships for low income children will make the program run more efficiently and lower the uncertainty that parents and schools face about the future of funding for these scholarships.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB401.

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL  
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Member of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated

