



## HOUSE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

### HOUSE BILL 603

### NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS - SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAM – ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION

FEBRUARY 22, 2023

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland, providing support and representation for the 30 Jewish day schools that operate in our great state and educate 10,000 students.

A facility or institution that bears responsibility for children on its property day-in and day-out, is compelled to have a medical presence ready and able to respond when a student experiences any type of ailment or injury. Nonpublic schools who sustain themselves via tuition and fund-raising struggle mightily to cover their education budgets, let alone their medical budget. Assisting a nonpublic school in covering their nursing costs is indeed a worthy investment for the State of Maryland, as all children are worthy of access to medical attention while in school regardless of where they are educated.

House Bill 603, as amended, will provide eligible nonpublic schools with a \$40 per pupil reimbursement for the health services costs it incurs. Eligibility for this program will follow the guidelines of the Aid to Nonpublic School Program (i.e. the nonpublic school textbook program) which ensures that it is only going to those schools who cater to a low-income population.

Currently there is a great need for school nurses across the Jewish day school community. Out of all the Jewish day schools, only nine currently employ a nurse, two of which are part-time only. The other schools have each individually expressed the need for a nurse and their desire to hire one as soon as they are financially able to do so. Efforts to pass a bill similar to this have been pursued in recent legislative session, yet they have not yet passed to come law in Maryland.

Although we have thankfully emerged to the largest extent from the COVID-era, there is still great and justified need for an adequate medical service program to allow for all schools to have an active nurse present during the school day. This reimbursement model provides the opportunity for all schools to help maintain the health and safety of our children.

**Thank you for your support of HB 603 and we urge a favorable report.**