



SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION SUBCOMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 7, 2024

SENATE BILL 552

OPERATING BUDGET – FUNDING – SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SUPPORT

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 130,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

Since the 2016 legislative session of the General Assembly, low-income Maryland families who seek financial assistance to send their child to a nonpublic school have been endowed with that opportunity. Thanks to the BOOST scholarship program and the Maryland legislature who has supported it, families who have made the decision a nonpublic school is best suited for their child(ren), may apply for a scholarship to assist them in covering the tuition cost. Their desire for this form of education still comes at great financial sacrifice, but one that they are willing to make despite the hardship.

Now, after eight years of the BOOST program, thousands of FARMs eligible Maryland families, from across the spectrum of minority and less-fortunate communities of all ethnicities, have benefited from attending the nonpublic school of their choosing. Their appreciation for these scholarships and the opportunities it has provided their children knows no bounds.

Parents who have made this choice appreciate the standards to which participating schools are held. The student assessments that prove that educational progress is being made and the assurances binding each participating school implemented for the safety and well-being of Maryland children, all contribute to the great success that this program has had.

But, these needs have grown continuously, and the need for a permanent BOOST program in Maryland law is well-justified. Senate Bill 552 seeks to do just that. SB 552 sets the initial allocation at the traditional \$10 million until FY 2026, after which time it will modestly increase over the following three years.

We appeal for your continued support of these low-income children and their families to allow BOOST scholarships to be codified in Maryland. All of the families who attend nonpublic schools are still providing tremendous savings to the state, and they gladly sacrifice the luxuries enjoyed by others to cover their portion of the cost for what they feel is the best and most conducive education for their children.

Please report FAVORABLY on Senate Bill 552. Thank you for your support.

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