



Chimes International

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Chelsey Ewers, Director of Government and Community Relations
Chimes International and The Chimes School
Maryland Senate Budget and Tax Committee
RE: Tuition rate freeze for nonpublic special education schools
March 4, 2026

To Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

My name is Chelsey Ewers, I serve as the Director of Government and Community Relations for Chimes International and am submitting testimony on behalf of The Chimes School in opposition of the Governor's proposed tuition rate freeze for FY27.

Founded in 1947 and located in Baltimore, The Chimes School is a nonpublic special education school that serves nearly 100 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities from ages five to twenty-one. Each student at The Chimes School is referred to us from the public-school system when it is determined the school does not have the resources to adequately support the student. When they enter our program, the goal is to give the students the tools and resources they need to return to the public-school setting. For those who are unable they can follow either a diploma or certificate track with Chimes. At The Chimes School we have students that travel as far as two hours each way on a bus to receive their education, these students, their families, and our staff are dedicated to ensuring each student receives the level of support they need to be successful.

Nonpublic special education schools like The Chimes School are a vital component to our education system and I urge the state to invest rather than divest from the education of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The state has an obligation to these students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to provide a "continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services." The proposed rate freeze in the Governor's budget offers a stark contrast to this obligation as there are also proposed increased in the public education systems that refer the very students we serve. The state needs to align funding for public and nonpublic school systems in this year's budget and proceed with MSDE approved 2.7% proposed rate increase that was determined based on the Consumer Price Index. The elimination of this rate increase would directly impact for our schools and our students. The state has also already put in place cost-containment measures that cover the next three years. These measures reduce the state's financial share to nonpublic placements and a rate

freeze on top of this measure is unnecessary and inequitable to the students we support. Nonpublic special education schools need the ability cover increased economic costs and increase staff salaries to remain competitive with our peers. The proposed rate freeze will directly impact this effort and also limit our ability to admit additional students. On behalf of The Chimes School, I ask that the freeze on tuition rates for nonpublic special education schools be stricken from the Governor's proposed FY27 budget.

Thank you Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, for your consideration of this testimony and support of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the nonpublic special education school system in Maryland. I look forward to being a resource to you and your colleagues and welcome outreach on any questions you may have.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chelsey Ewers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chelsey" being more prominent than the last name "Ewers".

Chelsey Ewers
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