



A Union of Professionals
AFT-Maryland

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**Written Testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
HB 532 - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program –
Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses
March 31, 2026**

SUPPORT

Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee: AFT Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 532. This vital legislation seeks to expand the allowable use of grant funds to include the hiring and retention of fine arts staff in schools with high concentrations of poverty. By doing so, the bill recognizes that a truly equitable education must include the arts as pillars of the curriculum.

The need for this stability is important in Baltimore City Public Schools, where fine arts programs have historically struggled with inconsistent funding and an over-reliance on temporary grants. While the benefits of arts education are well-documented, these programs are often the first to be cut during budget shortfalls.

For students navigating the challenges of trauma and unmet community needs, the arts provide a fundamental avenue for self-expression, healing, and connection. Investing in sustained public funding for arts personnel is a direct investment in the mental health and long-term success of our youth.

This bill ensures that schools in our most vulnerable communities can provide consistent access to certified arts educators and culturally responsive programming. We believe this legislation is a critical step toward achieving true educational equity for all Maryland students. Therefore, AFT Maryland urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 352 to ensure that our schools have the resources necessary to nurture the whole child.

