

**SUPPORT: Senate Bill 289**  
Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program  
Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses  
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
**February 3, 2026**

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My name is Marley Walter, I am a Baltimore City Public Schools student at Baltimore City College, and I am writing **in strong support of Senate Bill 289**, Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses.

When I was younger, I moved a lot, between Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Florida. I quickly realized gaps in the education I was receiving. Every time I moved back to Baltimore, I was ahead of the curriculum; I received fewer resources in art classes, and I even had art, science, math, and English classes that were lacking curriculum, goals, or solid units. Access to funding for education matters to me because students, regardless of where they reside, deserve to be prioritized both for educational and artistic opportunities.

Currently, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future states that **concentration of poverty funds from the personnel and per pupil grant** may be used through fiscal year 2027 to provide the programs required under COMAR 13A.04 ([2022. HB1450. §5-223\(c\)\(9\). Pg. 3](#), repeated in [2025. HB504§5-223\(c\)\(9\)](#). Pg. 16) for core subject areas, including the fine arts. By supporting SB289 and eliminating the sunset timeline in law, you will help ensure that arts education, along with other core subjects, continues to be an allowable use of funding to support world-class education that every student, both in and out of Baltimore City Public Schools, deserves to have access to and experience.

Let's be honest, school can be tough for a lot of kids. There's this one-size-fits-all idea of intelligence that the majority of us have come to agree upon, but that perspective is alienating at best. Sometimes art can be a break for kids who have internalized failures, and sometimes that break leads to massive forms of success, both in small, revolutionary forms and large ones too. I'd like to talk about what we all know about school first: not everyone is good at every subject, but the arts bring successful education to life. Recent research in studies, including ones published in the NPJ Science of Learning, finds correlations between art classes and rising GPAs, especially in Literature and Math classes.

The arts are not only a way to sustain ourselves in school, but in life as marginalized folk. Art inspires us to speak out, whether that comes to you verbally or not. For example, the Harlem Renaissance was one of the first periods of black people resisting constrictions placed on them through the embodiment of art. Although it may seem long ago, the value, reality, and words weigh just as heavily today. Zora Neale Hurston said that "If you are silent about your pain, they will kill you and say that you enjoyed it." Irrefutably true in the political climate. Right

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now, we live in a world of rising fascism, one that is defunding public education, banning our books, censoring our work, and removing our activism. Art is the way we write these perspectives back in. A way to prevent society from shaving off the forms of resistance that have transpired from uncensored work, or from people being adamant about speaking up. As students, as marginalized folks, there are few opportunities to speak up generally, with power and without harm. However, sharing art is one of the few outlets that can make us feel empowered or speak up in a way that is tangible and comfortable to us. Inspiring students to act and pursue creative solutions to existing problems should be a priority, your priority.

By supporting this bill and eliminating the sunset language, school communities will **continue having the option** to invest their CPG funding in the arts in response to community need. I urge the committee to provide a **favorable report on SB 289**. Thank you for continuing to invest in the livelihoods and educations of Maryland's public school students!

Sincerely,

Marley Walter

Baltimore City Public Schools student at Baltimore City College.