



Senate Bill 284 – Budget and Reconciliation and Financing Act 2026

Senate Budget and Tax Committee

March 4, 2026

My name is Scott Evans, and I am the CEO of The Benedictine School located in Ridgely in Caroline County. Benedictine is a nonpublic special education school and adult community service provider for children and adults with developmental disabilities. I am writing in opposition to the Governors' proposed tuition rate freeze for nonpublic special education schools for FY27. Specifically, I am asking for Section 11; Page 43 – line 32 and 33, and page 44 – lines 1 and 2 be stricken from SB 284.

Nonpublic special education schools are a vital extension of local school systems and fulfill an essential role in meeting students' needs. IDEA mandates a "continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services." Benedictine, and other Nonpublic Special Education Schools, are one component of that continuum. We ensure that each student's educational needs are met with a highly specialized environment that their local educational agency cannot offer.

A tuition rate freeze would be very challenging in this current economic environment. Benedictine has experienced increases in all aspects of our operational costs. As a nonprofit, we are always asked to do more with less, and that is becoming increasingly difficult. It is hard to understand this proposed cut when we see the Governor put forth substantial increases to educational funding for public schools but then decides to freeze funding for programs that support some of the most vulnerable students in Maryland. Bottom line, Benedictine cannot keep pace with the increased operational costs we are incurring while paying staff accordingly and keeping their benefits expenses reasonable.

I respectfully ask that the language in SB 284 be amended to remove language that freezes tuition rates for nonpublic special education schools in FY27. Please make the correct decision for Maryland students that have some of the most challenging needs.