



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

Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) writes **in strong support of Senate Bill 289**, Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses.

AEMS is a statewide nonprofit, committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education. We envision a public education system in Maryland that supports, cultivates, nurtures, and uplifts ALL students' creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can thrive in a healthy society. We regularly engage with arts educators around the state to learn about their successes and challenges as well as support them through professional development opportunities.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future admirably intends to transform Maryland's public education system into a world-class system. To help us get there, we must be diligent to ensure that all **critical and core content areas**, including the arts, are upheld and **supported through this transformation**. Particularly for schools that serve concentrations of students experiencing poverty, communities should have the opportunity to invest supportive funding into strategies they know to be best for their students. HB352/SB289 furthers the goals of the Blueprint in delivering this world class education by ensuring **uninterrupted allowable usage of funds** established at the outset of the Blueprint's implementation.

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). These programs form the core subject areas of a public school students' education: everything from science, mathematics, and fine arts to English language arts, social studies, and physical education.

After fiscal year 2027, the eligibility of this use of the concentration of poverty funds from the personnel and per pupil grant will expire. HB352/SB289 seeks to **eliminate the sunset timeline** in the law to ensure that arts education, among other subject areas, continues to be an allowable use of funding in perpetuity to support the world-class education every student deserves.

Arts education is critical and transformative for our students. The arts offer unique ways to connect and engage with the world around us, which often leads to a strengthened sense of belonging. The arts support social-emotional skill development that helps children thrive in all aspects of their lives. Learning an arts discipline **boosts neuroplasticity, producing long-lasting impacts on the brain.**



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The arts are also essential for college and career readiness, strengthening student's problem solving and critical thinking skills applicable to any path, including a collegiate or professional pathway in the arts.

Sunsetting this allowable use of funding would make it unnecessarily difficult to continue supporting arts education at the levels that are currently provided. To continue the investment in our children that we know is needed and possible, we believe that school communities should **continue having the option** to invest their CPG funding in the arts in response to community need.

With the passage of HB352/SB289, Maryland can maintain the Blueprint's foundation of a well-rounded education so that we can enhance it even further. Therefore, I urge the committee to provide a **favorable report on SB 289**. Thank you for investing in the future of our state: Maryland's public school students.

Sincerely,

Rachel McGrain
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