



**Oppose tuition rate freeze for nonpublic special education schools
Senate Bill 284: BRFA**

OFFERED ON BEHALF OF

The Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities
(MANSEF)

Senate Budget and Tax Committee

March 4, 2026

On behalf of the 70 nonpublic special education schools across Maryland currently serving approximately 3800 publicly funded school children, the Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF) offers this written testimony in opposition to the Governor's proposed tuition rate freeze for FY 27. (Section 11; Page 43 – lines 32 and 33, page 44 – lines 1 and 2)

Nonpublic special education schools are vital to the fulfillment of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, (IDEA). IDEA mandates a “continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services.” Our nonpublic special education schools are one component in that continuum and fulfill a unique and essential role in meeting students’ particular educational needs. The MANSEF schools are approved under COMAR 13A.09.10.

Students receive intensive related services such as speech, and occupational therapy, resulting in an increase in their level of independence. Students and staff are the core of our mission, and our special schools are where students feel themselves and have a sense of belonging. Our programs are needed more than ever.

A tuition rate freeze is a difficult blow during these extremely challenging fiscal times. All operating expenses are going up. In addition, this proposed rate freeze is very disappointing as we are serving the most fragile and vulnerable students referred by their local education agencies (LEA) and every LEA's budget is increasing. The Governor has proposed a substantial overall increase in education funding that excludes the very students we serve. We are asking for equitable consideration.

MSDE established a methodology using the US Consumer Price Index (CPI). While the CPI does not fully offset the rising expenses and therefore does not align with the actual costs incurred to provide all the staffing and support for our special students, eliminating it would be a direct hardship for our programs. In addition, the State previously put in place cost-containment measures by amending the nonpublic funding formula over a three-year period. This change reduced the state's financial share to nonpublic placements and increased the LEA share, thereby already lowering the budget line for nonpublic placements. Restoring the CPI increase has a negligible impact for FY 27 resulting in the State contribution to nonpublic placements virtually the same as last year. It is not necessary, then, to also do a rate freeze. We simply cannot keep pace with the higher occupancy costs and pay staff accordingly and therefore respectfully ask that language to freeze tuition rates be stricken from the BRFA.