

HB352 Sponsor Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Delegate Greg Wims

Position: FAV

GREG WIMS
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Ways and Means Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: HB352 - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses

Committee: Budget and Taxation

Date: March 31st, 2026

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and esteemed members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Greg Wims, presenting House Bill 352 – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program.

This bill is simple. It allows local education agencies (LEAs) to continue using Concentration of Poverty grant funding to meet arts education requirements, and other programs, under Maryland COMAR. This bill comes at the recommendation of AIB and local LEAs to ensure our state requirements are met in a cost-effective manner.

We all know how important arts education is, but I want to share a few quick statistics. Substantial arts learning has been shown to reduce disciplinary infractions by **3.6 percentage points** and increase writing achievement. That has a meaningful impact on both school climate and student learning, especially in schools with the greatest needs.

HB 352 ensures that the usage of these grants for arts education and other programs does not disappear due to the sunset.

This bill was cross-filed with Senator McCray's SB289 which was heard in this Committee on February 2nd.

I respectfully request a favorable report for HB0352. Thank you.

HB 352 - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Pro

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: FAV



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**Written Testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
HB 352 - 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 352. 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 HB 352 to ensure that our schools have the resources necessary to nurture the whole child.

HB 532 - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Pro

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: FAV



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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.

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Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: FAV



Testimony in SUPPORT of
House Bill 352: Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil
Grants – Eligible Uses
Budget and Taxation Committee
Position: Favorable
March 31, 2026

Strong Schools Maryland is a statewide network of parents, educators, and advocates committed to the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can feel safe and supported to learn and thrive in their school community. As a result, **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 352 – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil Grants – Eligible.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future aims to transform Maryland's public education system into a world class model, with community schools playing a central role in that vision. The community school model approach directs resources to meet needs identified through the school's Need Assessment, in order to recognize that every community is different and therefore has unique needs. Because those needs vary, not just between communities but within communities, flexibility is essential to this work. Effectively allocating resources, providing social and emotional support, and meeting students and families where they are requires the ability to respond to each school community's unique circumstance.

Currently, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future states that concentration of poverty funds from the personnel and per pupil grants 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. This regulation was purposeful as it allows for that spending flexibility and recognizes that meeting students' needs requires the ability to invest across a wide range of academic programming. HB 352 protects that principle by eliminating the looming sunset that would unnecessarily restrict how concentration of poverty grant funds may be used.

The sunseting of this flexibility would force schools into artificial tradeoffs that do not reflect student needs and or our vision for community schools as schools could lose the ability to sustain staffing, programming, and instructional supports that have already been built using these funds. Maryland will only achieve a world-class school system if we sustain and bolster the tools that meet students where they are. House Bill 352 affirms trust in community schools, respects local expertise, and keeps the Blueprint aligned with its original promise.

For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 352.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

HB 352 - State Board & MSDE - Support 3.31.26.docx

Uploaded by: Stefan Redding-Lallinger

Position: FAV

TO: Senate Committee on Budget & Taxation

BILL: House Bill (HB) 352 – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil Grants – Eligible Uses

DATE: March 31, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the State Department of Education (MSDE) provide this Letter of Support regarding **House Bill (HB) 352 – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – Personnel and Per Pupil Grants – Eligible Uses**.

House Bill 352 removes the Fiscal Year 2027 sunset date for an existing allowable expenditure of Concentration of Poverty Funds. Under current law, if a community school receives the Concentration of Poverty Personnel and/or Per Pupil grant (Education Article § 5-223), and the amount of grant funding exceeds the costs to employ the staffing positions required by the program, then the excess funds may be used to support programs required under [COMAR Title 13A, Subtitle 04, including 13A.04.16.01, Programs for Fine Arts](#).

The State Board and MSDE support continuing this option and removing the sunset date for Maryland’s Community Schools. All Community Schools complete a comprehensive needs assessment and implementation plan that guides the school in deploying Concentration of Poverty funding. Continuing this flexibility ensures that local education agencies retain the ability to respond to identified student and community needs, including sustaining access to high-quality arts and world language programming that supports a well-rounded education.

MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as **HB352** is discussed and deliberated. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov.