

HB0534_NonPublic_Schools_Transcripts_Student_Debt.

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR HB0534

Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts -Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Smith

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0534 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Student debt is skyrocketing and it is harming the future of our children. There are too many students who struggle with the burden of student debt, and in some cases never find a job that helps them pay it off. Institutions make it particularly hard for the student to pay off the debt when they refuse to give them a transcript that is necessary to get a job because of the debt.

This bill, if enacted, would preclude nonpublic schools in Maryland that receives state funding would be prohibited from –

- Refusing to provide a transcript to a student or parent/guardian because the student has an
- outstanding debt
- Condition the issuance of a transcript on payment of the debt
- Charge a higher fee for obtaining the transcript due to the outstanding debt
- Provide less favorable treatment of the request due to the outstanding debt
- Use the issuance of the transcript as a means of debt collection

Our members believe that if the student has done the work, the institution should be trying to help them get a job (which includes providing a transcript) and should not use the transcript as a hostage to collect the debt.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee

X HB534 Support (Written).pdf

Uploaded by: Kenzie Funk

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
House Bill 534: Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student
Debt**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

April 1, 2026

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the landmark 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. It was designed to specifically address systemic inequities that disproportionately impact historically marginalized communities. As a result, **Strong Schools Maryland offers favorable testimony in support of HB 534 – Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt** which aims to protect students from punitive measures that disproportionately impact those experiencing financial hardship by prohibiting non public schools that participate in State funded education programs from refusing to provide or take punitive actions in regard to a students' owed debt to the school.

The rising costs tied to k-12 education can create significant barriers for families, especially those who are low income. The current practice of withholding transcripts as a form of debt collection places an unnecessary and punitive burden on students, unrelated to academic performance, which can prohibit the student's continuity of learning. This proposed bill ensures that students are not penalized for financial issues or debts that are beyond their control or if they are not able to resolve their financial obligations.

HB534 prohibits nonpublic schools that participate in state funded education programs from

- Refusing to issue a transcript for outstanding debt
- Charging higher fees for obtaining a transcript because of debt
- Providing less favorable treatment to transcript requests based on debt
- Using the withholding of transcripts as a means of debt collection

These provisions would ensure that students are able to access their academic records that they would need to pursue job opportunities, higher education, or transitions from one school to another. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a school system where students can achieve higher education, career pathways, and transitions between schools. Many of these opportunities require transcripts and withholding of these necessary documents in punitive response to financial obligations

For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 534.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.

3.30 HB 534 - Nonpublic Schools - Transcripts - Pr

Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



HB 534 - Nonpublic Schools - Transcripts - Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

April 1, 2026

SUPPORT

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 534. This bill will prevent nonpublic schools from holding students' transcripts due to institutional debt.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

The rising costs tied to K-12 education can create barriers for families. To add, hidden fees, such as those for extracurricular activities, technology, or school supplies, can add up quickly especially for low-income families. When families cannot afford these costs, students often miss out on valuable learning opportunities, unfairly placing the burden of financial hardship on children for circumstances beyond their control.

This cycle compounds the challenges faced by children from low-income households. We must avoid creating additional barriers that hinder their ability to fully engage in school or pursue post-secondary education. These obstacles not only limit students' potential but also contribute to broader issues like food insecurity, housing instability, and financial stress.

HB 534 will allow for students to continue their educational and career goals, which in turn will put them in a better position to pay their debts. Punitive actions on students facing financial hardships will limit not only the family's potential to pay their debts, but it will also limit the institution's ability to collect.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 534.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

Testimony to Sen. EEE on HB534 EconAction FAV.doc

Uploaded by: Marceline White

Position: FAV



Testimony to Senate Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee
HB534 Nonpublic Schools-Transcripts-Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt
Position: Favorable

April 1, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
Cc: Members of the Committee

Chair Feldman and members of the Committee,

Economic Action Maryland Fund urges a favorable report on HB534, which prohibits a school that participates in State-funded education programs from refusing to issue a transcript to a current or former student due to student debt.

HB534 builds on past work in the General Assembly to address student loans and student debt for struggling students. In the past, some students who were applying for employment or graduate studies found that their school would not release their transcripts until certain student debts or fees were paid. In many ways, this created a vicious cycle of poverty, as students were unable to gain a sustainably-waged job which would allow them to pay their school debt, because the school would not release their transcript.

HB534 will allow students to gain skilled jobs or apply for graduate studies without fear that their transcript will be withheld for a debt.

For all these reasons, we support HB534 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

Economic Action (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) champions economic rights and housing justice through advocacy, research, consumer education, and direct service. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD 21218 | www.econaction.org
Marceline White · Marceline@EconAction.org | Jennifer Bevan-Dangel · Jennifer@EconAction.org

HB0534 - crossover bill - FAV - Prohibition on Pun

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

04/01/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL HB#0534 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of crossover bill HB#0534, Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt

Acceptance of public monies for private educational activities should carry responsibilities in how those persons affected by that funding are treated. For example, a private school may be held responsible for discrimination in some cases. This bill says that an earned educational achievement as signified by a transcript of grades earned cannot be denied to a private school student in an institution using public funds. Said denial cannot occur based on debts that may be owed by the student or student's parents to that private school.

There are alternate avenues for pursuing payment of debts that are based on the existence of a debt. These avenues do not contemplate withholding of vital documentation earned during the accumulation of the debt. In some cases, it is the parent that has the responsibility to satisfy the financial obligation; the student should be held harmless while the debt payment is being negotiated. A student's future should not be a hostage to this debt.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on crossover bill HB#0534.

crossover MDCAPE - HB 534 - Opposed.pdf

Uploaded by: Ariel Sadwin

Position: UNF



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 534

NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS – TRANSCRIPTS – PROHIBITION ON PUNITIVE MEASURES RELATED TO STUDENT DEBT

APRIL 1, 2026

OPPOSE

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of over 138,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

Tuition is a fundamental means by which nonpublic schools cover the numerous expenses required for proper maintenance and operation. For this reason, it may sometimes be necessary for a school to have the option of implementing certain punitive measures if a responsible party fails to fulfill the agreed-upon tuition payment. The tuition agreement between a parent or caregiver and the school is entered into voluntarily, with clear terms. If a parent or caregiver attempts to avoid or renege on their financial obligations, it is essential that the school has the ability to encourage them to meet their commitments.

Many of our schools operate under tight budgets, meaning that even small payments can significantly impact their financial stability. While our schools hold great respect for our parent community, it must be acknowledged that, on occasion, there will be those who attempt to renege on their contractual agreements. It is important that our schools retain their independence rather than taking away what is often the school's only resource to ensure that the money owed to them is paid. House Bill 534 would remove this resource.

We therefore respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report on House Bill 534.

Thank you.

MD Catholic Conference_HB 534_UNF SENATE CROSS.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: UNF



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

April 1, 2026

HB 534

Nonpublic Schools – Transcripts – Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt

**Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
Position: UNFAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in opposition to House Bill 534. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

House Bill 534 would prohibit nonpublic schools from withholding transcripts from parents for unpaid tuition. Under this bill, where a parent has breached their legally binding tuition contract, a school may no longer condition the release of a transcript on payment in fulfillment of that legally binding contract, despite the parents having freely agreed to it.

Many nonpublic schools rely almost entirely on tuition to keep teachers paid, lights and heat on, and high-quality curriculum materials in the classrooms, just to name a few basic expenditures. Thus, nonpublic schools must form a contractual agreement with parents and guardians to ensure that there is recourse if tuition is not paid. Part of that agreement is that transcripts may be withheld for nonpayment of tuition, so as to incentivize parents who might leave a nonpublic school community to ensure that financial agreement obligations are paid before moving on to another school. **Very often, parents will leave tuition unpaid and then jettison to another private school for various reasons, only to go pay tuition at the next school.** They often have the means to pay, but instead leave their previous school without the income administrators budgeted to pay teachers, maintenance, utilities and materials. Thus, this only avenue of recourse is dire for schools, many of which operate on very thin budgets.

As there are 138,000+ nonpublic school students in Maryland, this legislation is likely to result in an increased strain on Maryland courts by forcing schools to initiate collections actions and litigation. **Currently, the ability to withhold transcripts often results in payment or settlement agreements, thus peaceably resolving the situation.** The state should not impede free, fair and willing contractual obligations entered into by its citizens. It is for these reasons that we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 534.

crossover Agudah testimony - HB 534 - School Debt

Uploaded by: Rabbi Ariel Sadwin

Position: UNF



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 534

**NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS – TRANSCRIPTS – PROHIBITION ON PUNITIVE MEASURES
RELATED TO STUDENT DEBT**

APRIL 1, 2026

OPPOSE

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland, and on behalf of the 10,000+ students attending 30 Jewish day schools in our great state.

Tuition is a primary way through which a school maintains its ability to operate. As such, it is important that the schools retain mechanisms through which proper tuition collection can be enforced. The tuition agreement between parent or caregiver and the school is freely entered into, and with clear terms. If a parent or caregiver then attempts to evade or renege, it is important that the school have the ability to incentivize them to change course. It is therefore important that schools have the ability to exercise the threat of taking various punitive measures in the event that the other party attempts to evade paying the agreed-upon tuition payments for the education their child or ward has received.

While our schools respect our parent body immensely, we do recognize that on occasion the ability to withhold a transcript until the parent meets their obligation is a necessary means of ensuring the school receives the funds it needs to pay salaries and properly function.

It should be noted that many of our schools are forced to operate on a tight budget, and thus even small amounts of payment can have a great impact on their operations. It is important that our schools retain their independence rather than be constrained, as House Bill 534 would do. Of note as well is that House Bill 534 would create a significant increase in litigation as schools would be forced to utilize the courts, rather than settling disputes independently.

We therefore respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report on House Bill 534.

House Bill 534 (CO) - Nonpublic Schools - Transcri

Uploaded by: Rory Murray

Position: UNF



Association of Independent
Maryland & DC Schools

Hon. Brian Feldman
Chair
Senate, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Bill: House Bill 534 - Nonpublic Schools - Transcripts - Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt
Position: Oppose

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

House Bill 534 would fundamentally alter the contractual relationship between nonpublic schools and the families they serve, and we respectfully request an unfavorable report on this legislation.

Concern about loss of contractual recourse

Nonpublic schools generally have no access to the State's public collections infrastructure and limited remedies beyond the terms of their enrollment contracts when families do not satisfy tuition or fee obligations. For many schools, the ability to place reasonable, clearly disclosed holds on transcripts is one of the few tools available to encourage good-faith payment and resolve outstanding balances without immediately resorting to costly litigation or third-party collection. By categorically prohibiting participating nonpublic schools from refusing, conditioning, or even using transcript issuance "as a tool of debt collection," HB 534 would allow students and their families to unilaterally break contractual obligations with effectively no practical recourse for the school.

Effect of HB 534's broad prohibitions

Under the bill, "debt" covers any money, obligation, claim, or sum due or owed by a student or former student to a nonpublic school, other than the actual cost of providing a transcript. At the same time, subsection (B) flatly bars a school from refusing to issue a transcript, conditioning issuance on payment, charging a higher fee, providing less favorable treatment, or using transcript issuance as a debt-collection tool whenever such a debt exists. In practice, this means that even in cases of clear, undisputed nonpayment of tuition or fees, a nonpublic school that participates in a State-funded education program must release transcripts upon request without any leverage to enforce freely negotiated enrollment contracts.

Consequences for nonpublic schools and families

Removing this last meaningful enforcement mechanism will place real financial strain on nonpublic schools, particularly smaller faith-based or community schools that operate on thin margins and rely heavily on tuition to pay staff and maintain programs. As tuition losses grow harder to manage, schools may have no choice but to tighten admissions, increase up-front payment requirements, or raise tuition for all families to offset uncollectible accounts. These consequences would ultimately reduce access and affordability for the very students and families the State seeks to support through its education programs.



Association of Independent
Maryland & DC Schools

Request for alternative approach

If the General Assembly wishes to address abusive or unreasonable transcript-withholding practices, we would welcome a more balanced approach that preserves narrowly tailored, contract-based tools while prohibiting truly punitive or discriminatory conduct. As drafted, however, HB 534 goes much farther, effectively stripping nonpublic schools that participate in State-funded programs of any practical leverage to enforce payment obligations and undermining the stability of the nonpublic education sector. For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 534.

Thanks for your time and consideration,

Peter Baily
Executive Director
AIMS MD&DC