



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

House Bill 352: Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses
Ways and Means Committee
February 11, 2026, 2pm
Favorable

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chairs Feldmark, and Members of the Committees:

On behalf of the Baltimore Teachers Union, we strongly support House Bill 352, which extends the allowable use of personnel and per pupil grants for schools with concentrations of poverty to include funding for fine arts staff. This legislation recognizes that students in high-poverty schools deserve access to the same rich, well-rounded education as their peers — one that includes music, visual arts, theater, and dance as core components of learning, not optional add-ons.

In Baltimore City Public Schools, fine arts programs have too often been unstable, underfunded, or dependent on short-term grants rather than sustained public investment. Yet educators consistently see how fine arts instruction improves student engagement, academic achievement, attendance, and social-emotional development. For many students, the arts are also a critical avenue for self-expression, healing, and connection — especially in communities facing high levels of trauma and unmet need.

Allowing these grant funds to support fine arts staff will help grow and stabilize arts programming in schools that need it most, ensuring consistent access to certified arts educators and culturally responsive programming. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report and move this bill forward to advance educational equity and opportunity for Maryland's students.

Thank you for your consideration.