

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

My name is Jamaira Johnson, a Baltimore City Public Schools student at Reach! Partnership High School and I am writing **in strong support of Senate Bill 289**, Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - Personnel and Per Pupil Grants - Eligible Uses.

Equitable Arts education matters because it helps students feel comfortable with who they really are. According to data from IPaintMyMind, a Public Charity / Nonprofit Organization, students who take art classes excel more in school, other subjects, and even after they graduate high school. 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) for core subject areas, including the fine arts. By supporting SB289 and eliminating the sunset timeline in law, you will help ensure that arts education, along with other core subjects, continues to be an allowable use of funding to help ensure students use art to their strongest ability.

Taking art classes such as Theatre, not only motivated me to go to school, but it helped me discover who I am and why it matters. My Theatre teacher has not only been a wonderful teacher but they guided me through my high school experience and helped me realize how important arts education truly is. He gave me the resources I needed to succeed not only in the class but outside of it. Such as helping me get through my home situations when I didn't have anywhere to go, or when I was in an unhealthy relationship; He taught me the importance of knowing how important it is to know who you are and what to allow yourself to settle for. If he hadn't been a shoulder for me to lean on I wouldn't have mentally made it through my senior year in high school. That's why it matters to know who you are. Because when you know who you are, you stop letting the world tell you who to be. That's why it's important to fund programs such as theatre because it not only uplifts their want to widen their horizon but helps them find who they are.

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Allowing schools to use Concentration of Poverty Grant funds to provide arts classes in schools not only provides structure and identity for students, but gives them a chance at a better life after high school. It also gives them hope and relief that they can be their own person and not who society “told” them to be.

Art not only provides students with the comfort of knowing it's okay to be who you are, but it also helps them realize that you express that through art.

Pablo Picasso once said “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up” This quote emphasizes the importance of letting a child grow into art rather than restricting it from them, because it's almost like restricting a child from their identity.

By supporting this bill and eliminating the sunset language, school communities will **continue having the option** to invest their CPG funding in the arts in response to community need. I urge the committee to provide a **favorable report on SB 289**.

Sincerely,

Jamaira Johnson

Baltimore City Public Schools student at Reach! Partnership High School