

BOAST defeated in committee

A bill that would have provided business tax credits to businesses that support tuition scholarship programs was defeated on a 15-5 vote in the House of Delegates Ways and Means Committee March 22.

The bill would have established a program called BOAST, "Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers in Maryland," allowing businesses to claim a 75 percent state tax credit for donations to organizations that support Maryland's K-12 public and nonpublic school students and teachers. The program would have been capped at \$25 million.

The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee had previously defeated the Senate version of the bill in a March 12 voice vote.

Despite BOAST's failure, Mary Ellen Russell, associate director for education and family life with the Maryland Catholic Conference, said she was pleased with the support of lawmakers. The reason it failed is that the state is facing a budget deficit, said Ms. Russell, noting that many of the lawmakers who voted against the bill supported the BOAST concept.

"A lot of people wished we had the money to pass it," she said. "I think the legislature is trying to be disciplined about not spending new money."

Ms. Russell said the measure's chief sponsors, Sen. James DeGrange of Anne Arundel County and Del. James Proctor Jr. of Calvert and Prince George's counties, were strong BOAST advocates.

"We'll be back next year," she said.

The following delegates on the Ways and Means Committee voted in favor of the BOAST bill:

Page Elmore, Ron George, Susan Krebs, Melvin Stukes and Jewel Walker.

The following delegates on the Ways and Means Committee voted against the BOAST bill:

Ann Marie Doory, Kumar Barve, Jon Cardin, James Gilchrist, Carolyn Howard, Jolene Ivey, J.B. Jennings, Anne Kaiser, Nancy King, Robert McKee, Peter Murphy, John Olszewski, Craig Rice, Justin Ross and Frank Turner.

Joseph Barlett was not present.