

Delegates deny using BOAST as bargaining chip

Delegates James Malone Jr. and Steven DeBoy Sr. are denying reports they threatened to derail a business tax credit benefiting non-public and public schools as a way of pressuring Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien to keep open the "more successful" Catholic schools slated for closure.

Investigative Voice, a local online news site, reported March 13 that during a recent community meeting at Ascension School in Halethorpe, the delegates cited the bill as an example of legislation they and other lawmakers could stall to prevent the closures.

The legislation, known as BOAST - Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers in Maryland - would grant businesses a 75 percent state income tax credit for donations to scholarship organizations for nonpublic school students. It would also support enrichment programs in public schools and professional development for public and private school teachers.

Gov. Martin J. O'Malley is among the bill's supporters who believe passage of the bill would help prevent future Catholic schools from closing.

"My job is to advocate for my constituents and to advocate for that school (Ascension)," Del. DeBoy told The Catholic Review, "but I certainly didn't state in any comment that I was going to interfere or stop BOAST in any way."

Del. Malone also told The Catholic Review that he "never, ever said anything" like what was reported in the Investigative Voice. Like Del. DeBoy, he pledged he would vote for BOAST if it makes it to the House floor.

"Would we like to see BOAST passed?" Del. Malone asked. "Sure we would. Absolutely."

Alan Z. Forman, reporter for the Investigative Voice, told The Catholic Review his reporting was accurate.

“We stand by everything in our story 100 percent,” he said.

Del. DeBoy and Del. Malone, Democrats who represent Baltimore and Howard Counties, told The Catholic Review that they both are longtime BOAST sponsors.

“I don’t know how much more you can do than being a sponsor to let everyone know how you feel about it,” Del. Malone said.

Both delegates have raised concerns about the archdiocese’s plan for consolidation of Catholic schools.

As The Catholic Review went to press, the full Senate was expected to pass the BOAST bill March 17. Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien and Casper R. Taylor Jr., former speaker of the House of Delegates, were to testify in support of BOAST during a March 17 hearing in a house committee.