

Hogan's budget includes textbook funding, but no money for aging schools

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While Gov. Lawrence Hogan Jr. included \$6.04 million in his operating budget to continue a state textbook program in nonpublic schools, he removed \$3.5 million in his capital budget for the nonpublic aging schools program.

The textbook program allows students at qualifying nonpublic schools to save \$95 a year on textbook expenses. The aging schools program helps older nonpublic schools pay for deferred maintenance projects.

Garrett O'Day, associate director for education and family life with the Maryland Catholic Conference, said the legislative lobbying arm of the state's Catholic bishops opposes the cut in the aging schools program, and will work to see lawmakers restore it.

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While the Legislature has no authority to add funds in the operating budget, it can add funds in the capital budget. O'Day said he understands that the governor cut from many areas to cover a \$750 million deficit, but believes the aging schools program should be preserved.

"Nonpublic schools got nothing for a very long time," he said. "The aging schools program has only been in there for two years. It's a program that's very much needed."

O'Day noted that hundreds of schools utilized the program in the last two years, completing improvements they could not have afforded otherwise.

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