

Making Catholic Schools More Affordable

I hope everyone enjoyed the long Labor Day weekend and that it proved especially restful for those families with children who had already begun school or were preparing to begin the new school year this past week.

I was fortunate to be able to experience “back to school” once more as I recently visited three Catholic schools in Baltimore County. Not only was it exciting to be there to see the children and teachers on that first day, but it also prepared me for the important work of enlisting greater financial support for those families who wish a Catholic education for their children.

Since my school visits, I’ve been meeting with legislators and business leaders in our State to discuss their support for the Maryland Education Credit. The Credit, which we hope will become a reality after the next General Assembly session, would provide a 60 percent tax credit for business donations to organizations that financially support nonpublic or public school students attending elementary and secondary schools in Maryland.

It is hoped that this incentive will encourage greater community investment in all schools and will help to off-set the rising cost of tuition by covering such things as supplies, equipment, special needs services, uniforms, transportation, computer technology and even tutoring and extended day programs. This tax credit would go a long way toward making our schools more affordable for our Catholic families and others who would like their children to benefit from a Catholic education.

We are grateful for the \$6 million Maryland’s nonpublic schools currently receive from the State for textbooks, and for the \$3.5 million in new funds for school building upgrades. But at an average of \$95/child, the subsidy is not enough to make our schools more affordable. And, compared to how surrounding states are assisting nonpublic students and their families (\$340.4 million in PA, \$207 million in NY, and \$164.3 million in NJ) it’s easy to see that Maryland should be doing more.

After all, our schools make students better and make our communities better. With a 99 percent graduation rate last year, standardized test scores that far outpace the national average, and a proven track record of producing students who are thoughtful, responsible, caring, and generous, we should all be working together to ensure more children receive a Catholic education. *To learn more, go to www.educationmaryland.org.*