

Statement of Archbishop Edwin O'Brien on BOAST Maryland Tax

Archbishop Edwin O'Brien, Archbishop of Baltimore and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Maryland Catholic Conference, issued the following statement today:

Last night's 11th hour vote by the House Ways and Means Committee to kill the BOAST Maryland Tax Credit illustrated the sad triumph of special interests over the needs of low-income students, and a heartless disservice to the 55,000 students in Maryland's Catholic schools, their teachers, and their families. BOAST was a popular bill that had received the endorsement of the governor, the approval of the Senate, and the support of 75 House co-sponsors who recognized it as a modest and fiscally responsible way to assist all students and teachers. The committee's action can only be interpreted as a sign of disrespect to the nonpublic school community that has served our state for over two centuries.

I am extremely disappointed in the elected officials who worked against this proposal, and who showed a total lack of sensitivity to the needs of the families our schools serve, and the impact that a quality education can have on the life of an at-risk child.

I am especially dismayed by the House's failure to work collaboratively to address concerns about the legislation, which has been brought before the delegates throughout their four-year term. House leadership offered last-minute amendments to BOAST that would have gutted the tax credit and excluded our friends in the Jewish school community from its benefits - all without any attempt at consultation. Chairwoman Sheila Hixson and Subcommittee Chairwoman Anne Kaiser, both from Montgomery County, blocked attempts to work on BOAST at every possible opportunity. A few co-sponsors also caved to political pressure and voted against the bill in committee.

At the same time, the nonpublic school community was fortunate to have champions in BOAST sponsors Sen. James "Ed" DeGrange, Del. Jim Proctor, and Del. Jay

Walker. They fought passionately for all students and teachers in our state and should be commended. I am likewise grateful to Gov. O'Malley and Senate President Miller for their support of the bill.

Maryland's Catholic and other nonpublic schools provide a great public service and we will continue to advance efforts that support those students and families.

Catholic schools and other nonpublic schools in the State of Maryland save Maryland taxpayers \$1.5 billion each year in per-pupil expenses. To view the findings of an economic analysis measuring the benefits of Catholic schools, conducted by the Sage Policy Group, visit www.archbalt.org/aplacetogrow.