



BOAST TAX CREDIT

DRAFT: Final versions will be distributed on Lobby Night

SPONSORS: Sen. James "Ed" DeGrange (Dist. 32)
Del. James Proctor (Dist. 27A) & Del. Jay Walker (Dist. 26)

COMMITTEES: House Ways and Means (Del. Sheila Hixson, chair)
Senate Budget and Taxation

**CONFERENCE SUPPORT
POSITION:**

TALKING POINTS

- The BOAST Maryland Tax Credit benefits ***all*** students and teachers – those in both public and nonpublic schools – and will help reinforce the state's #1 public schools ranking.
- Catholic school students and teachers are a vital part of our state's education system. More than 57,000 students are enrolled in Maryland Catholic schools, providing a savings to the state of more than \$712 million annually.
- During a time of economic difficulty, the state cannot afford to lose these savings through school closings or decreases in our enrollment.



LEARN MORE:
BOAST TAX CREDIT

POSITION: SUPPORT

SPONSORS: Sen. James "Ed" DeGrange (Dist. 32), Del. James Proctor (Dist. 27A)

BACKGROUND:

The BOAST Maryland Tax Credit would give businesses a 75% state income tax credit (instead of a standard charitable deduction) in exchange for their donations to groups that provide:

- scholarships for Catholic and nonpublic school students
- grants to Catholic and nonpublic school teachers for continuing education
- enrichment programs for public school students.

BOAST benefits all students and teachers. Donations made through BOAST will:

- Help Catholic school students receive scholarships from scholarship organizations
- Assist more lower- and middle-income families in sending their children to Catholic and other nonpublic schools
- Help stabilize enrollment Catholic and other nonpublic schools
- Assist Catholic and other nonpublic school teachers in receiving grants to cover the cost of graduate-level coursework or professional development programs. This will allow them to meet "highly qualified" standards, making it easier for nonpublic schools to recruit and retain talented teachers.
- Provide the opportunity for local businesses to invest in our schools, while the schools will be able to secure the resources needed to increase enrollments and stabilize tuition costs while providing a high-quality educational program.

In 2009, BOAST was prevented from being brought to a vote in the House Ways and Means Committee. It has previously passed the full Senate. By strengthening the partnership between Maryland's business and education communities we are allowing our schools to grow and improve their programs while businesses thrive by attracting new residents to the community and cultivating a well-trained and educated workforce.

CHURCH TEACHING:

"As the primary educators of their children, parents have the right to choose the school best suited for them. The entire Catholic community should be encouraged to advocate for parental school choice and personal and corporate tax credits, which will help parents to fulfill their responsibility in educating their children." (*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, USCCB, 2005*)

MCC staff: Ellen Robertson, 410-269-1155, 301-261-1979, erobertson@mdcathcon.org



POVERTY

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LEGISLATION: *Budget Bill*

CONFERENCE POSITION: Oppose cuts to programs that serve those in most need.

TALKING POINTS:

- The budget reflects the state's priorities. The highest priority should be assigned to preserving programs that help vulnerable Marylanders meet their most basic needs.
- As the economy has worsened, Maryland's social services safety net has become increasingly strained. A system that was already challenged is now tasked with catching those who are newly in need of help.
- Repairs to the safety were needed even before the most recent rounds of budget cuts. When it comes time to make the repairs, a simple restoration of recent cuts will not be enough. Funding decisions should be based on Marylanders' needs, not on historic funding levels.



LEARN MORE:
POVERTY

LEGISLATION: *Budget Bill*

POSITION: Oppose cuts to programs that serve those in most need.

BACKGROUND:

Poverty in Maryland

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006-2008 *American Community Survey*, 449,460 Marylanders – one in 12 people in the state, more than the entire population of Maryland's Eastern Shore – live in poverty. For a family of four, "living in poverty" means having an annual income of no more than \$22,050. These figures, however, capture few of the effects of the current recession. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Maryland's July 2009 unemployment rate stood at 7.4% – double its rate of 3.7% just 16 months before (March 2008). This is the highest reported level of unemployment in Maryland in more than 17 years (since February, 1992).

The Budget

Maryland's budget starts with the governor; his administration develops the bill that will be considered by the legislature. Once the budget bill is introduced, it is sent to the General Assembly's two budgetary committees: the Senate Budget and Taxation (B&T) Committee and the House of Delegates Appropriations (APP) Committee. In committee, the budget is broken up and considered by issue-oriented subcommittees. In B&T, the Health, Education, and Human Resources Subcommittee handles poverty-related programs. In APP, the programs are considered by the Health and Human Resources Subcommittee. B&T and APP members wield more influence over the budget than their colleagues on other legislative committees.

Recent Budget Cuts

Three-fourths of Maryland's general fund revenues come from income and sales taxes. As both sources have dropped off considerably in the current recession, the Governor has had to resort to a series of budget cuts to keep Maryland's budget balanced. Since the (current) Fiscal Year 2010 budget was passed at the end of the 2009 legislative session, it has already suffered three major rounds of cuts. At the end of July, the budget was cut by some \$281 million; just a month later, it was cut by an additional \$454 million. In November, \$364 million more was cut. The combined \$1.1 billion in cuts include the following measures that will have real and negative impacts on Marylanders in need:

- **Prescription drug assistance** – Elimination of the Maryland Medbank Program, which provided prescription drug assistance to low-income patients who were uninsured or under-insured.
- **Mental health** – Closure of the Upper Shore Community Mental Health Center and the closure of units at three other facilities.

- **Health and community services** – Reductions in rates paid to health care and community services providers, including *nursing homes*, providers of *mental health* and *substance abuse* treatment, Medicaid *Managed Care Organizations*, and providers of *developmental disabilities* services. Rate reductions can cause providers to go out of business, or to stop accepting Medicaid patients and state agency referrals.

Even with these cuts and an influx of federal stimulus dollars, it has been estimated that the State will face a shortfall of \$2 billion in Fiscal Year 2011. Certainly, more programs will be vulnerable to budget cuts in the coming months. Federally-funded programs, which are not under direct threat from State budget cuts, will still face indirect threats in the form of staffing cuts to the State departments that administer them.

Challenges to Assisting Marylanders in Need

A fair number of State and Federal programs exist to serve Marylanders in need. However, even before the recent rounds of budget cuts, the efficacy of most of the programs – State and Federal alike – was limited by a number of factors:

- **Low levels of assistance** – Many programs provide such low levels of assistance that they are inadequate to meet people’s needs. Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), for instance, provides a monthly grant of just \$695 for a family of four. This is often all a family has to provide for its non-food needs. The Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) provides just \$185 a month to disabled adults who are not working or collecting unemployment, SSI or SSDI.
- **Waiting lists** – Programs that provide more adequate levels of assistance (and even some that don’t) often have lengthy waits before they can be accessed. The Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8) fills in the gap between the cost of housing and the rent a family can afford. However, families generally wait years before they receive a voucher. The waiting list in Baltimore County is currently seven years. Waiting lists in some jurisdictions have closed entirely.
- **Low income eligibility** – Some programs are accessible to very few because their income eligibility guidelines are so low. In order for a disabled, single, childless adult to qualify for Medicaid in Maryland, he or she must have an income of less than \$2,500 annually.
- **Inadequate staffing** – Departments of Social Services (DSS) – where Marylanders go to apply for assistance for their housing, energy, medical, food, and income needs – are terribly short-staffed. Though social workers can feel busy with a caseload of fewer than 50, some DSS employees now have caseloads of 1,000. The situation has had a major impact on Marylanders’ ability to access services – even services that are fully funded by the federal government.

CHURCH TEACHING

“It is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1908*)

MCC staff: Julie Varner Walsh. 410-269-1155, 301-261-1979, jwalsh@mdcathcon.org



PREGNANCY SUPPORT

DRAFT: Final versions will be distributed on Lobby Night

LEGISLATION: *Various*

CONFERENCE POSITION: Help pregnant women choose life;
Do not hinder work of pregnancy resource centers

TALKING POINTS:

- No woman should feel forced to have an abortion, because of a lack of resources, pressure from others, or for any reason.
- The Catholic Church in Maryland is dedicated to helping women in a crisis pregnancy receive practical, competent, and compassionate assistance. The Church helps provide this through both monetary and in-kind support.
- No one wants to watch Maryland's abortion rate continue to rise – please work with us to identify life-affirming ways to encourage women to choose alternatives to abortion.
- Pregnancy resource centers offer pregnant women both emotional and material assistance. Please oppose proposals that would hinder their work.



LEARN MORE:
**PREGNANCY
SUPPORT**

LEGISLATION: *Various*

POSITION: Help pregnant women choose life; do not hinder work of pregnancy centers

BACKGROUND: Women who face an unplanned pregnancy deserve practical, competent, and compassionate assistance to help them continue their pregnancy, especially if they have been abandoned by their family or friends, face economic pressures, or are worried about school or a job. No woman should feel that abortion is her only choice.

The Catholic Church in Maryland works to meet the needs of these women. Parishes refer women to nonprofits that provide crisis intervention counseling and help navigating social service and health programs. The Church also provides much-needed financial support to these charities. Annually, Maryland's Catholic churches provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to pregnancy resource centers, as well as untold dollars of "in kind" support, such as diapers and infant and maternity clothes. Encouraging women to receive prenatal care, as well as helping them access social services, leads to healthier babies and moms. By helping women get a GED, acquire vocational skills, or get help with addictions these life-affirming programs help mothers become self-sufficient, capable and confident.

The need for assisting pregnant women in crisis is great. Maryland's abortion rate is nearly 40% higher than the national rate. More than one-in-four Maryland pregnancies end in abortion. Maryland is also one of the most abortion-permissive states in the nation. Maryland does not require parental consent before a minor's abortion, does not regulate abortion clinics as surgical facilities, and does not require that abortion statistics be collected.

Sadly, some recent state (2008) and local (2009) proposals have sought to hinder the work of pregnancy resource centers that provide women with emotional and material support, simply because they have a pro-life mission. Those proposals undermine the "common ground" on abortion that many in the pro-choice movement claim to seek, as well as impede efforts by these charities to provide much-needed assistance.

CHURCH TEACHING: "Newborn life is also served by centers of assistance and homes or centers where new life receives a welcome. Thanks to the work of such centers, many unmarried mothers and couples in difficulty discover new hope and find assistance and support in overcoming hardship and the fear of accepting a newly conceived life or life which has just come into the world." (*Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, p. 88*)

MCC staff: Nancy Paltell, 410-269-1155 or 301-261-1979, nancy@mdcathcon.org



MARRIAGE

DRAFT: Final versions will be distributed on Lobby Night

ISSUE: *Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage*

CONFERENCE POSITION: OPPOSE

COMMITTEES: Senate Judicial Proceedings (JPR)
House Judiciary (JUD)

TALKING POINTS:

- Marriage as the union of one man and one woman has had a privileged status throughout history in all faiths and cultures.
- Civil marriage is reserved to the union of one man and one woman because only a mother and father can bring children – society’s next generation – into the world.
- Evidence from a majority of states, including California and Maine, shows that the public overwhelmingly supports the traditional definition of marriage.
- Support for traditional marriage should not be equated with bigotry against homosexual persons, who deserve to be treated with respect and compassion.



LEARN MORE: MARRIAGE

ISSUE: *Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage*

POSITION: OPPOSE

BACKGROUND: In 2007, the Maryland Court of Appeals upheld the constitutionality of the Maryland statute defining marriage as between a man and a woman, but acknowledged that the legislature may “grant and recognize for homosexual persons civil unions or the right to marry a person of the same sex.” As a result, the last several sessions of the Maryland General Assembly have seen a number of bills introduced to legalize same-sex marriage or civil unions in Maryland. In 2008, two laws were passed that undermine marriage by equating unmarried couples with married couples in parts of Maryland’s health and tax statutes; a third law relating to the inheritance tax was passed in 2009. More recently, Maryland’s attorney general has been considering whether the state should recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. A ruling is expected soon.

Recognizing the important role marriage plays in securing a stable foundation for society, the Church supports efforts to preserve traditional marriage, and opposes efforts to alter the legal definition of marriage. The Church opposes legislation to permit same-sex marriages or civil unions and domestic partnerships, since the legal definition of a civil union or domestic partnership is essentially the same as that of a same-sex marriage. The Church does not necessarily oppose granting certain benefits to couples who are not married, such as medical decision making rights, as long as the proposals do not impose requirements on private institutions contrary to their moral or religious beliefs, or create an alternative legal definition of marriage.

The title of the bill to legalize same-sex marriage, the *Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act*, is misleading: The bill **does not expand religious freedom** and it **does not protect civil marriage**. Rather, it attempts to redefine marriage. Recent court rulings have demonstrated that civil unions or domestic partnerships are not a “compromise.” Voters in California, Maine and 29 other states continue to vote to uphold the traditional definition of marriage – displaying the overwhelming support for marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

CHURCH TEACHING: “Marriage . . . contributes to society because it models the way in which women and men live interdependently and commit, for the whole of life, to seek the good of each other. The marital union also provides the best conditions for raising children: namely, the stable, loving relationship of a mother and father present only in marriage. The state rightly recognizes this relationship as a public institution in its laws because the relationship makes a unique and essential contribution to the common good.” (*Between Man and Woman, USCCB, 2003*)

MCC staff: Mary Ellen Russell. 410-269-1155, 301-261-1979, mrussell@mdcathcon.org