



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE + ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON + DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**STATEMENT TO THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
R00A03.04: AID TO NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NONPUBLIC SCHOOL TEXTBOOK/TECHNOLOGY LOAN PROGRAM**

**Submitted by
Mary Ellen Russell
January 31, 2008**

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the bishops serving Maryland from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of the nearly 61,000 students served by Maryland's 167 elementary and secondary Catholic schools.

We are here today to urge your support for the \$3.6 million allocated in the FY 2009 budget for the Nonpublic Schools Textbook/Technology Loan Program.

We are grateful to the members of this committee and the many other members of the General Assembly who have continued to support this program. At a minimal cost to the state, this program benefits the families of more than 87,000 students attending approximately 335 nonpublic schools in Maryland. We are also grateful to the administrators at the Maryland State Department of Education for their efforts to ensure the program operates efficiently and with great accountability.

As you are aware, funding for this program has been reduced from an original allocation of \$6 million included in the FY 2001 budget. At the same time, the number of students benefiting from the program has increased by more than 10,000 students, from 77,393 students attending 257 schools when the program began, to more than 87,000 students last year.

While funding was partially restored to \$4 million in the past two years, the program has again been cut in this budget, despite the continuing increase in students. These reductions have meant a decrease in per pupil allocations at most schools from \$60 when the program first began, to about \$30 per pupil at the \$4 million level. We urge you therefore to protect every penny of the program's allocation this year, in order to avoid further reductions to the benefit this program provides to so many school families.

The support provided through this program is urgently needed by the Catholic school community in Maryland. As tuitions continue to rise to meet the increasing costs of teacher salaries, our school enrollments show that more and more families are unable to afford these increases, especially at the elementary level. As the attached figures indicate, Catholic school elementary enrollment has decreased by more than 5,000 students in the past five years, and 16 Catholic schools have closed or merged in the state.

The benefits offered through the Textbook/Technology program certainly are not going to provide a complete solution to the urgent needs of our school community. But your support of this legislation is an important step toward recognizing that the health of Maryland's nonpublic school community is of vital importance to our state, and even to the well being of our public-school system. Inevitably, nonpublic-school enrollment decreases and school closings will increase costs for local public schools, where resources and space are already often limited. It is especially important to keep in mind the need to maintain affordable, educational options for all families in light of the anticipated strain that our public schools are likely to face in accommodating new students due to the upcoming military Base Realignment and Closure program.

Here in Maryland, and throughout the country, the Catholic community is committed to finding innovative and long-lasting solutions to the challenges our schools are facing, and to continuing our schools' long-standing tradition of serving lower- and middle-income families. We urge you to support the Nonpublic School Textbook/Technology program as one way in which the State of Maryland can partner with us in those efforts. We often invest our state support in private enterprises that bring financial and other benefits to the state of Maryland. Surely this program and the small assistance it brings directly to our school families is worthy of our state's support.

Again, we thank you for your past support of this program, and urge you to retain the full \$3.6 million allocated for the program in this year's budget.

Maryland Catholic School Enrollment

Includes schools from the Archdiocese of Washington,
the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and the Diocese of Wilmington (Eastern Shore)

Total Enrollment

2006-07 enrollment:	60,834
2001-02 enrollment:	64,612
5-year enrollment change:	3,778 fewer students (- 6%)

Elementary Enrollment

2006-07 elementary enrollment:	41,893
2001-02 elementary enrollment:	46,804
5-year change:	4,911 fewer students (- 10%)

Secondary Enrollment

2006-07 high school enrollment:	18,941
2001-02 high school enrollment:	17,808
5-year change:	1,133 more students (+ 6%)

Savings based on
total Catholic-school enrollment:

\$657,007,200

(2006-07 enrollment X \$10,800 - average public school per-pupil cost in 2005-06)

Savings based on
total K-12 nonpublic-school enrollment:

\$1,479,308,400

(136,973 K-12 nonpublic students X \$10,800)