



Weekly Window

Agudath Israel of America

Office of Government Affairs

**News and Information from the week of
March 25 - March 30, 2012**

Maryland Education Credit Draws Hundreds of Students to the State Capital

Rabbi Ariel Sadwin - Director

Maryland

On Tuesday, nonpublic school students and teachers from all across Maryland came out in droves to Annapolis to express their support for the Maryland Education Credit. Schools representing the Jewish, Catholic, Christian, and Muslim faiths joined together with nonpublic school advocates to lobby state legislators for their support of the measure that could bring vital relief to nonpublic school students and their families.

Formerly known as the BOAST (Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers) bill, the Maryland Education Credit legislation (House Bill 1216 and Senate Bill 844) is a corporate tax credit program that provides lucrative tax incentives to corporations and businesses when they contribute charitable dollars to scholarship granting foundations that serve four or more nonpublic schools. The scholarships generated would then be distributed to students based on their financial needs. The program also provides the tax credits when the donations are directed towards student assistance organization that provide specific education expenses for public school children.

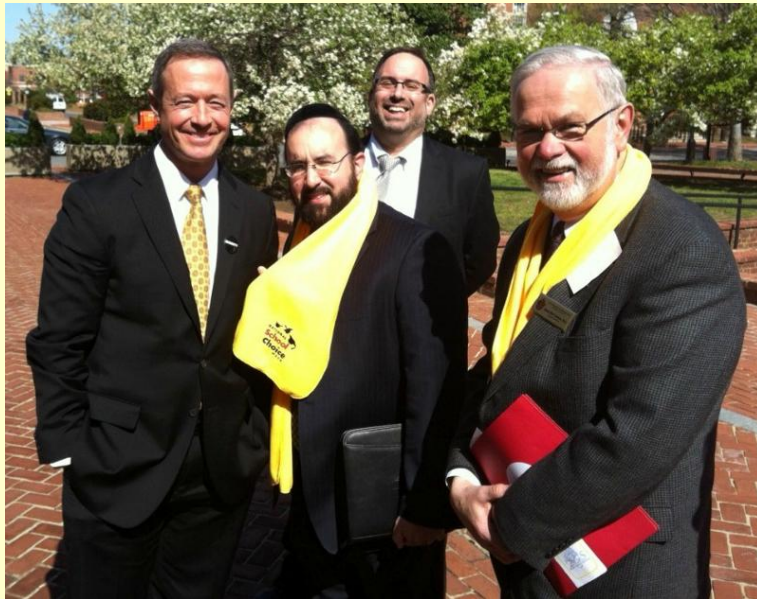
These programs have successfully passed the legislatures in an ever-growing number of states, most recently our southern neighbor, Virginia. Our northern neighbor, Pennsylvania, has had

their scholarship tax credit program, (EITC), (Education Improvement Tax Credit) in place for over a decade. Jewish day school students across the Keystone State have experienced tremendous benefit from this program and it has played a vital role in schools' financial sustainability during this period of economic hardship.

After gathering in the morning to receive their materials and instructions (and those dashing yellow scarves, courtesy of National School Choice Week), the students and their teachers went around the House and Senate office buildings meeting legislators from their home and school districts and lobbied for their support. The guests took turns observing the floor sessions of the House and Senate from the gallery before gathering for a lunch reception in the Miller Senate Building.

At the lunch reception, the assembled were addressed by a number of leading legislators (including the bill's House sponsor, Del. Jay Walker) and by student advocates who volunteered to share their thoughts about nonpublic schools and how this legislation could provide much-needed assistance to nonpublic school communities. Among the student advocates who shared brief remarks with the gathering were: Leeba Kleiman (Bnos Yisroel), Tehilla Aryeh (Bais Yaakov), and Chana Hillman (Yeshiva of Greater Washington).

Also in attendance, representing Jewish nonpublic schools at the event on Tuesday were: four members of the senior class of Yeshiva of Greater Washington (YGW) - Girls Division, led by their principal Mrs. Sima Jacoby and Rabbi Binyamin Sanders, YGW's Director of Development; four members of the senior class of Bais Yaakov of Baltimore, led by teacher, Mrs. Judy Schnidman Katz; the junior class of Bnos Yisroel of Baltimore, led by their teacher Mrs. Yardena Gardyn, their principal Rabbi Yochanan Stengel, and Mr. Dovid Chaim Heyman; and Mr. Zev Teichman, the Executive Director of Torah School of Greater Washington.



L-R Governor Martin O'Malley, Rabbi Ariel Sadwin, Rabbi Binyamin Sanders (Yeshiva of Greater Washington), Deacon Bert L'Homme (Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.)