

65 East Wacker Place • Suite 1620
Chicago, Illinois 60601
(312) 368-1066
FAX (312) 368-1090



108 East Cook Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704
(217) 528-9200
FAX (217) 528-7214

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Contact: Mr. Zachary Wichmann
(217) 528-9200

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS TO BE REIMBURSED FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES!

Thanks to the final approval of the Governor and the General Assembly, nonpublic schools are, for the first time ever, eligible to directly receive state reimbursements for health and safety measures. A provision contained in Senate Bill 783, also known as the budget implementation (BIMP) bill, allows nonpublic schools access to the Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant.

The block grant currently contains \$75 million to reimburse Illinois schools, based on their enrollment, for otherwise unfunded health and safety measures. Nonpublic schools will use their share of this money to fund such things as state mandated teacher background checks, fire safety measures, AEDs and other important measures designed to protect the well-being of students.

“This victory is huge,” said Zach Wichmann, Associate Director for Education for the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI). “For the first time, the state will be providing our schools with direct reimbursements for health and safety measures, most of which are required but not funded by the state or local governments. It took a lot of vision, hard work and dedication over the past year, but our Catholic school advocacy really came through.”

An application process and rule-making have to be generated by the Illinois State Board of Education before grant money begins to flow, but CCI has already reached out to begin this work. Nonpublic schools in Illinois should receive their first block grant reimbursements before the end of the school year.

There is a chart posted on CCI’s web site, www.catholicconferenceofillinois.org, detailing how much reimbursement each Catholic school in Illinois should be eligible to receive. Due to the late passage of this legislation and budgetary vetoes, the reimbursement will probably be something less this school year, but we hope and expect it to be at or near the posted level next school year.

When the program is fully up and running Catholic schools will see annual reimbursements ranging from \$858 to \$81,549, depending on enrollment.