

The only conditions provided in the present law for eligibility is that the child be handicapped, that his parents be Maryland residents, that there be no public school program for the child, and that he be attending an approved non-public school. The amount of reimbursement is either the actual cost of the approved non-public education or \$1,000, whichever is less. The present law goes on to provide that if the cost exceeds \$1,000 and if there are funds available in the State budget to pay the excess cost, to the extent of such available funds the entire cost can be paid. House Bill 738 amends the present law by allowing the State Board of Education to limit both eligibility for and the amount of reimbursement over the sum of \$1,000.

There are, at present, at least three study groups reviewing different aspects of existing problems and programs in the area of special education; and preliminary indications lead me to conclude that one result of these studies will be recommendations for improvements in the public education of handicapped children. It would certainly seem that, subject to available resources, there should be adequate public programs for as many handicapped children as possible.

Until such programs are developed and in operation, however, the State must do what it can to see that these children are educated; and in many cases, it may be impossible for handicapped children to receive an adequate education without full cost reimbursement. The "excess cost" reimbursement program has been in existence and funded in its present form since 1969, and in nearly every year since then, the Department of Education has failed to utilize all of the funds appropriated for the program but has reverted a considerable part of them. There does not appear, therefore, to be such an excess of demand for these funds as would justify further restrictions in the eligibility of parents to receive them, or in the amount they may receive. If and when additional public programs are established, it may well be necessary or desirable to limit the funds appropriated for non-public education and shift them to the public programs; but in light of the problems which I understand to exist, I believe it is premature to curtail the reimbursement program at this time.

For these reasons, I have decided to veto House Bill 738.

Sincerely,

/s/ MARVIN MANDEL,

Governor.

House Bill No. 764—Tax Exemption for Towson Presbyterian Church

AN ACT to add new ~~subsection~~ SECTION 9(18B) to Article 81 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1969 Replacement Volume and 1971 Supplement), title "Revenue and Taxes," subtitle "What Shall be Taxed and Where," to follow immediately after ~~subsection~~ SECTION 9(18A) thereof, to provide an exemption from ~~State and local assessment and~~ LOCAL taxation for the real property owned by the Towson Presbyterian Church ~~known as the "Beetree Retreat~~