



Education Advocate

ACLU Presents A Financing Plan to Modernize All Baltimore City School Buildings!

Now that winter weather has arrived, students, teachers, and parents are complaining about the lack of heat in school buildings throughout Baltimore City. As outlined in the ACLU's *Buildings for Academic Excellence* study, student achievement suffers in school buildings that are unhealthy, deficient, and outdated. Bringing all city school buildings up to adequate standards is estimated to cost \$2.8 billion, and now there's a clear way to make it happen!

Today, the Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute (MBTPI) released a report outlining a financing strategy that could fully fund the \$2.8 billion needed to modernize all school buildings in Baltimore City within 10 years. This report, commissioned by the ACLU, proposes an innovative financing model that draws upon initiatives that have been successful in full-scale school modernization initiatives in other districts and states.

Partnership Organization: Acquiring \$2.8 Billion For The School Modernization Plan

MBTPI's approach involves using a "partnership organization," which would have the authority to borrow money and manage all aspects of the school construction program. The partnership organization would be able to borrow all of the money needed up front so that funds would be available immediately for the 10-year construction program. Under the current state and city funding system, only \$40-50 million is contributed to improve city school facilities annually, making it impossible to comprehensively fix all city school buildings.

The partnership organization will also have the ability to pay off the debt over 30 years, instead of the current 15-year payback schedule. This strategy, now being successfully used in other districts, will dramatically lower the amount needed each year to pay back on the debt.

Paying for the School Construction Program

In addition to the increased funding that would be available under a partnership structure, both the city and state would need to contribute funding or develop new revenue sources to pay off the debt for the school construction plan. The report proposes that the debt would be repaid over 30 years through a combination of the following sources:

- Direct lease payments to the partnership by the state and city
- Proceeds from two new local revenue measures
 - A 1% local option sales tax
 - A 1% tax on meals and beverages sold within the city
- A share of impact aid paid to Baltimore City from proceeds of video lottery terminal (slot machine operation)

Georgia, Iowa, and Florida have used the local option sales tax successfully to fund large-scale school building and renovation programs. State enabling legislation would be needed for the city to implement the proposed local revenue options.

Conclusion

This report shows one way to fully meet the \$2.8 billion need in the space of a decade. It requires some extraordinary action - a sustained financial and management commitment by the state, the city, and the school system. But it's possible, and it will have both immediate and long-term

benefits that far outweigh its costs.

[Read the ACLU's Press Release and the Full MBTPI Report Here: A Proposal to Finance a Full Scale Modernization of Baltimore City Public School Facilities](#)

[Read Today's Baltimore Sun Article on MBTPI's Report](#)

What's the Next Step? Join the ACLU and the Baltimore Education Coalition!

PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DUE TO THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATION ADVOCATES!

Upon releasing the *Buildings for Academic Excellence*, the ACLU and education advocates have been working to make new and modernized school buildings a priority for city and state officials. In September, more than 100 people attended Councilwoman Mary Pat Clark's Education Committee hearing on the ACLU's report. Since then, the Mayor Rawlings-Blake has publicly acknowledged that the status quo - deficient and old city school buildings - is unacceptable and a detriment to the success of city students and communities. In collaboration with Dr. Alonso and the city school system, the Mayor announced a new task force to make recommendations on how to finance the \$2.8 billion needed to modernize all city school buildings. And recently, Council President Jack Young, Councilman Jim Kraft, and other council members have introduced a bill to set up a fund for improving school facilities. **The ACTION taken by parents, teachers, students, and education advocates made this progress possible -- BUT WE HAVE MORE WORK TO DO!**

YOU ARE NEEDED! JOIN THE ACLU AND THE BALTIMORE EDUCATION COALITION IN THE CAMPAIGN TO MODERNIZE ALL CITY SCHOOL BUILDINGS!

The effort to transform Baltimore City schools relies heavily upon the collective action of Baltimore City citizens. The ACLU and the Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC) are working together to make sure that the Mayor and other city and state officials follow through with their commitment. Please join the coalition!

Contact Frank Patinella, Education Advocate at the ACLU, 410.889.8550 x 123 or patinella@aclu-md.org to get involved!

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland Education Reform Project

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