



# Education Advocate

January 2014

## FY 2015 Budget Flat for Local Schools

The proposed Fiscal Year 2015 state budget (HB 160) includes only a small increase in funding for local school systems. After several years of flat funding or capped 1% increases the Governor has included a 0.46% increase in the per pupil amount this year. The increase does little to help school systems keep up with the real cost of doing business. As the cost of electricity, materials, and other basic essentials of education continue to rise, the only option is to cut back in order to balance local school budgets.

The budget does contain full funding of the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI). GCEI is an important piece of the funding formula that provides additional funding to jurisdictions like Baltimore City, with higher costs for educating students. This funding, along with the implementation of the Net Taxable Income fix passed last year, and the 0.46% inflation factor increases education funding through the "Thornton" formula by \$123.8 million statewide in FY 2015. If the budget passes as proposed (with no cuts) **Baltimore City schools will receive an increase \$6.2 million in state funding compared to last year.** Much of this increase is driven by adding 800 more students to the Free & Reduced Meals program, which increases state education funding.

Now that the budget moves into the hands of the Maryland General Assembly, we have the opportunity to make our concerns known and to push for more funding for our schools. Learn how you can make a difference at the Baltimore Education Coalition Legislative Preview Night.

(See Budget by the Numbers and more budget highlights below)

## Baltimore Education Coalition 2014 Legislative Preview!

January 29, 5:30-8pm

**How will the state budget deficit affect classrooms in Baltimore City?**

**Is the 21st Century Buildings for Our Kids program on track?**

**How can Pre-K be fully funded?**

The ACLU's Education Reform Project is working with the Baltimore Education Coalition to answer these questions and more! Join us as the BEC discusses possible threats to Baltimore City School funding and lays out its plan for action in the legislative session to make a difference for Baltimore City students.

### In This Issue

[BEC's Legislative Preview - Jan 29](#)

[State Budget Highlights](#)

### TAKE ACTION!

Baltimore Education Coalition's Legislative Preview

January 29, 5:30-8pm

Digital Harbor High School

[Click here to learn about the issues and actions in Annapolis](#)

### WHAT WILL A NEW GOVERNOR MEAN FOR EDUCATION?

Join the Baltimore Education Coalition's Education Forum & Discussion with the leading Gubernatorial Candidates

Stay Tuned for More Information

Wednesday, January 29, 2014  
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm  
(Dinner at 5:30 pm)  
Digital Harbor High School, 1100 Covington Avenue



## Budget Highlights

### FY 2015 Budget - By the Numbers

- **\$6,860** - amount of Target Per Pupil Foundation funding after 0.46% increase.
- **\$123.8 M** - The FY 2015 budget statewide increase in Aid to Local School Systems.
- **\$132.6 M** - amount of the fully-funded Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI).
- **\$26.8 M** - additional aid to local school systems generated by the Net Taxable Income fix implemented at the 40% level (of this, nearly half will go to Prince George's County).
- **\$4.3 M** - funding for proposed Pre-K expansion across the state to create 1,000 new seats.
- **\$400,000** - amount included to begin the "Adequacy Study" to reevaluate the Bridge to Excellence formula.

### Private Schools make gains in Governor's Budget

The expansion of public dollars flowing to private schools that are not required to follow anti-discrimination laws and are not held accountable for academic results (as public schools are) is troubling. Last year private schools received an increase in funding in the operating budget and, for the first time, received money under the Aging Schools Program of the Capital Budget. In FY 2015 the trend continues:

- Governor's FY 2015 budget sets aside \$6.04 M for private schools textbook funding; and
- Governor's Capital Budget includes \$3.5 M for private schools under the Aging Schools Program (ASP).

This slippery slope is especially concerning when the money available to public schools continues to fall short of the mark. The Aging Schools Program was established in 1997 to address the most dire facility conditions in Maryland public schools and was based on the percentage of the district's square footage built prior to 1970. Private schools applying for funding are given money not based on facility need, but on the number of students who receive textbook aid.

We must let legislators know that it is not acceptable to divert much needed operating and capital funding from our public school systems when many are struggling to keep pace with the growing cost of educating Maryland's students.

### Governor Provides \$4.3 Million for Pre-K Expansion

Access to quality Pre-K education has had a significant impact on closing the achievement gap between low-wealth students and their more affluent peers. While not all school districts were quick to embrace Pre-K, a few have gone above and beyond to offer free full-day programs to families below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and their investment has

paid off.

The proposed FY 2015 budget includes \$4.3 M to support a competitive grant program administered by the Maryland State Department of Education designed to provide an additional 1,000 Pre-K seats for families up to 300% of poverty. [Senate Bill 332 \(HB297\)](#) outlines the proposed grant program and establishes priorities for implementation including geographic diversity in selection, unmet need, adding additional half-day seats, expanding to full-day programs, and adding additional [Judy Early Childhood Education Centers](#) by 2018.

Expanding access to Pre-K education to more families in Maryland is an important goal. However, we must also recognize and support the efforts of school systems that are already providing free full-day Pre-K education to their communities. The ACLU will be working actively to ensure that adequate funding for full-day Pre-K is incorporated into the "adequacy study" of the Thornton formula, set to begin in the coming months.

### **Evaluating Education Funding Adequacy - A Decade of Bridge to Excellence**

Rooted in the Maryland Constitutional guarantee to a "thorough and efficient" education, the Bridge to Excellence Act of 2002 implemented a transformative education funding formula across the state with the goal of providing the resources necessary for all Maryland students to be successful in school. The Act also mandated that the state would review the funding formula in ten years' time to ensure the formula continued to meet the needs of students. This process was delayed by two years due to the impending implementation of the common core standards.

However, this year, the Maryland Department of Education will begin the process of reexamining adequacy. An expert on education funding and adequacy will be hired by this summer to begin the work of determining what Maryland students need to adequately meet state standards. A budget request of \$400,000 is included in the FY 2015 proposed budget. The ACLU will be working hard to ensure that the funding available for the study is sufficient to ensure the adequacy study is completed in a professional, transparent, and valid manner that thoughtfully addresses the current resource challenges facing Maryland students and educators.

## **American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland Education Reform Project**

Bebe Verdery, Director  
Frank Patinella, Education Advocate  
Jessica Clark, Education Advocate  
Charly Carter, Education Advocate  
Lauren Linn, Education Intern

410.889.8555 | [education@aclu-md.org](mailto:education@aclu-md.org) | [www.aclu-md.org](http://www.aclu-md.org)

Like us on **Facebook** 

Follow us on **twitter**

 Forward to a Friend



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to clark@aclu-md.org by [education@aclu-md.org](mailto:education@aclu-md.org) |  
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

ACLU-MD Education Reform Project | 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 350 | Baltimore | MD | 21217