



Education Advocate

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Join us on September 23, 4pm at City Hall

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Options for New and Renovated School Buildings for Baltimore! Join Us on September 23!

**Is the Extreme Heat in Your School a Health Concern?
Is Your School Equipped to Support a Quality Education?
Are Classrooms Too Cold in the Winter?**

Join Us to Voice Your Support for Modernized City School Buildings at the:

Baltimore City Council
Education Committee Hearing
Thursday, September 23, 2010
4pm to 6pm
City Hall, 4th Floor
200 N. Holliday Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke and members of the Baltimore City Council will host a hearing on the new ACLU report, "Buildings for Academic Excellence." The ACLU will present the findings in the report and highlight solutions to address the \$2.8 billion needed to renovate and modernize all city school buildings. Dr. Alonso will give remarks and members of the public are invited to testify. Read more about the report below.

Let Us Know If You Can Come!

Contact Frank Patinella, 410.889.8550 x 123, or patinella@aclu-md.org

A New School In Baltimore City: Violetville Elementary School

After 15 years of advocacy, the Violetville community has finally realized their dream of a new school building. The \$14 million school just opened its doors for the new school year and offers wired classrooms for modern technology, computer labs, art and music rooms, a gym/auditorium and a new cafeteria. Unlike most city schools, this new building is fully air-conditioned, a basic feature that all students have in Anne Arundel and Howard counties. And there's more to come! The second phase of the project involves the complete renovation of the old school building constructed in 1929.

For decades, teachers and students have struggled to teach and learn in the 81-year old school. Classrooms in trailers, opaque windows, deficient heating, and an inadequate electrical system were daily hindrances to learning. The Violetville community has shown that by being organized and persistent, change can happen!

[Read about the new Violetville Elementary School in the Baltimore Sun](#)

Bebe Verdery, Education Director for the ACLU of Maryland is quoted in the Baltimore Sun, "You can see the excitement and pride in the staff and students. This is what Baltimore must embrace for all of its children and all of its schools."

Average city and state funding for city school building improvements is only about \$50 million per year. If current funding trends continue, there may be a new/renovated school each year. However, this will leave most Baltimore City students and teachers struggling in deficient school buildings for decades to come, while school communities continue to fight over limited funding. **A new approach is needed!**

Now, we have an opportunity to act. All teachers and students deserve excellent school buildings that are safe, healthy, and academically supportive. Other districts have completely modernized their schools through innovation, expanding and leveraging revenue, and a firm commitment from government leaders. It's time for Baltimore City to take a step towards this vision! **Come to the hearing on September 23rd to support this initiative!**

Buildings for Academic Excellence: A Vision and Options to Address Deficient School Buildings in Baltimore City

Buildings for Academic Excellence, a new report released by the ACLU of MD's Education Reform Project, urges city and state leaders, with community support, to move forward vigorously to modernize city school buildings. The ACLU contends, and a number of courts have concluded, that the constitutional guarantee of an adequate education includes school facilities that support a modern day academic curriculum.

Current Conditions of Baltimore City's School Buildings

- 70% are in POOR condition
- Inadequate to support a 21st century academic curriculum
- Health and safety risks (poor air quality, potable water, harmful materials)
- Negative impact on academic achievement and teacher retention
- Funding is grossly inadequate to address the need
- \$2.8 billion is needed to modernize/renovate all school buildings

Benefits of Modernized School Buildings

- Increase academic achievement
- Improve student attendance, graduation, and morale
- Attract and retain high quality teachers
- Mitigate health and safety risks (potable water, air quality)
- Help revitalize city neighborhoods
- Attract and retain middle-income families and increase enrollment in city schools
- Stimulate the economy by creating many jobs in construction and related industries
- Save on utility bills by using new and efficient systems

Modernized School Buildings Are Possible!

- Greenville, South Carolina: Used innovative financing and public-private partnerships to leverage existing funds to renovate or build new, 86 schools in 5 years
- New Haven, Connecticut: The state paid for 80% of New Haven's school modernization initiative
- Georgia: Voters approved referenda in almost every district, to increase their sales tax by 1% to pay for new and renovated schools

[Click here to view or download the full ACLU report or the Abell Foundation summary](#)

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

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