



Education Advocate

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Candidates for Governor Discuss Baltimore School Issues

The Baltimore Education Coalition (BEC) hosted a packed room of over 300 parents, teachers, community leaders, and students to hear what the three Democratic* candidates had to say about school funding, Phase II of the 21st Century Buildings for Our Kids program, and full-day Pre-K funding for city schools. Ensuring that the children of Baltimore are a primary concern for the next Governor will be of vital importance because the state will be reexamining the way school systems are funded over the next 2-3 years.

[Click here to watch a 13-minute video of the candidates answering these questions:](#)

Question 1: What are your views on the upcoming education adequacy study and the principles of adequacy and equity in the formula as it relates to students across the state, including the city of Baltimore?

Question 2: What steps might you take to renovate and improve the remaining 100 buildings that were not addressed in the 21st century school construction program?

Question 3: What's your view about funding Pre-K in the state education formula? How important is funding full-day Pre-K for low-income families, like Baltimore's program?

It wasn't just the candidates who had something to say! [Watch City Springs debate team's mock gubernatorial debate](#) and a teacher and student from Wolfe Street Academy explain the [importance of Phase II of the 21st Century buildings program](#).

* *Republican candidates were also invited but declined to attend.*

In This Issue

[Gubernatorial Candidates on Baltimore Schools](#)

[Critical School Facilities Fundings for City Schools](#)



Annual State School Construction Funding: Essential to Keep the Heat On!

Winning the financing to support a \$1 billion Baltimore school construction program during the 2013 General Assembly was a major achievement! BUT many people do not realize that it is only part of the solution to rebuild deteriorating city school buildings. While the \$1 billion program is estimated to fully renovate or build 35 new schools, approximately 100 old

and deficient city school buildings are left unfunded. **To keep these 100 schools functional for tens of thousands of children and teachers -- until financing is secured to rebuild them -- City Schools relies on the state and city's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for school construction.** These funds (\$28-41 million annually from the State, \$17 million from the City) are used literally to keep the heat on, replacing ancient boilers, replacing roofs and fixing faulty fire alarm systems.

It is essential that these annual funds continue at the same level to keep the 100 buildings functional. But given the state's \$20 million per year commitment to the 21st Century School Construction program, certain state leaders believe that City Schools should get less state CIP funding. Realizing that this cut would be devastating to tens of thousands of city children, **the ACLU took swift action to protect Baltimore's CIP funding.**

In November, 2013, when initial CIP funding to City Schools fell short, the ACLU worked with City Schools, Senator Joan Carter Conway, and the Mayor's office to ensure that funding would be restored during the next rounds of allocations. City Schools had to show that it had plenty of eligible projects and that its projects were on schedule. State decision-makers eventually restored CIP funding to City Schools at \$35 million this year, similar to the allocation to other large districts. This funding will address dozens of critical systemic repairs ([see list of city school CIP projects here](#)).

We thank Senator Carter Conway and other City delegation members for their advocacy this year. However, future threats to cut CIP funding from City Schools are likely and we -- both advocates and city and state officials -- have to remain vigilant to ensure that the full school construction program is funded for city children.

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland Education Reform Project

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