

ACLU of Maryland Education Advocate

Advocacy for Maryland's At-Risk Students

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An Adequate Education is a Constitutional Right!



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Do Schools in Baltimore Want More Money Next Year?

Everyone reading this would say "Yes!". If so, how hard are you willing to work for it? Can school staff, parents, and students pull together to capture tens of millions in aid offered by the State?

There's a clear way to do it, and you've got 2 more weeks. Every student should turn in a Free & Reduced Meals (FARMs) application before the Oct. 31 deadline. If a family's income qualifies the child for FARMs, your Title I elementary/middle school will get about \$1100 more next year. Your high school will get \$900 more next year. **FOR EACH STUDENT!** The school system as a whole gets an additional \$4850 from the state **FOR EACH** qualifying student, which helps all City schools.

With tens of millions at stake, what more can each school do to capture every single form? Return rates thus far for FARMs forms are slightly up, but high schools' return rate is generally low and a number of K-8s are still lagging behind last year. Each school has been given a list on the Principal's Dashboard of students to contact. Network teams have been directed to assist schools.

There are challenges in getting all students & families to sign up. But some schools have figured it out: Frederick Elementary has a 100% return; William Paca Elementary is at 99.2%; Chinguapin Middle 95.7%; Vivien T. Thomas Medical Arts Academy High has a 91.8 % return rate so far,; Dr. Raynor Brown PreK-8 is at 98.9%, with only three forms out.

The state education formula provides additional funds to support students from lower-income families. But unless the forms are turned in, the state doesn't know which schools need more funding to assist the students. In this economy, funding cuts are always a threat. But if you want more money for your school next year, turning in FARMs forms is something you can control. Two weeks to go.

State Treasurer Nancy Kopp to Discuss Improving School Facilities

The Maryland Education Coalition, a statewide advocacy group, invites you to attend our annual event on Thursday, October 22nd. This year, the coalition is advocating for improving school facilities statewide since many students in Maryland are still subjected to unsafe, unhealthy, and inadequate school buildings that lack the modern equipment and technologies to support learning in the 21st Century.

To RSVP, call the ACLU at 410.889.8550 x 123, or visit this [site](#)

The Challenge: Modern, Safe Schools for All Students

Date: Thursday, October 22, 2009

Time: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Location: Maryland PTA Office, 5 Central Ave., Glen Burnie, MD 21061

Panelists: State Treasurer Nancy Kopp, Prince George's County School Board Member Donna Hathaway-Beck, Director of Maryland's Public School Construction Program, David Lever, Executive Director of the 21st Century School Fund, Mary Filardo, and ACLU Education Reform Project Director, Bebe Verdery.

Baltimore Students Display Photos of Crumbling Schools at the U.S. Senate

The 21st Century School Fund, Healthy Schools Campaign, and Critical Exposure invited students, parents, teachers, and education advocates to participate in "Through Your Lens: School Facilities Across America," a

national photo exhibition displayed on Capitol Hill to bring attention to school building deficiencies in the country. The exhibition brought advocates from various states to urge legislators to provide federal funding to improve school facilities in a bill that is current pending. This bill could bring up to \$60 million to Maryland's school buildings.

Baltimore Freedom Academy staff and high school students, Briana Wills, Josiah Richardson, Brandon Stevenson, and Morgan Turner-Cohens, collaborated with the ACLU of Maryland to submit pictures and captions of school facility deficiencies from Baltimore City for the exhibition. Two photos from Baltimore City were selected out of 20 that were displayed in the Senate Rotunda on October 5, 2009. Ms. Wills was one of 5 speakers to present on the deplorable conditions seen in public school facilities, highlighting the disparity between low wealth districts and their surrounding wealthy counties.

Also, the group presented their work on the Marc Steiner Show last week and appeared in the Baltimore Sun's Inside Ed. Click on the links below to hear the show, write in your comments on the Sun's blog, and see the gallery of photos.

[The Marc Steiner Show](#)

[The Sun's Inside Ed](#)

[Gallery of Photos](#) (Type "Baltimore" in the search bar to see our work)

The ACLU of Maryland contends that safe, healthy, and modern school facilities are a critical part of providing a "thorough and efficient" education under the state constitution. If you would like to be involved with improving school facilities, please contact us at 410.889.8550 x 123 or at patinella@aclu-md.org.

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