



## ACLU Education Advocate

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### Action: Call or Email the Governor Today - Education Funding At Risk

#### Education Funding At Risk

Governor O'Malley has publicly stated that he does not plan to fund the mandated inflation increase to education for the next school year, 2008 - 2009. The proposed cut will be a loss of \$29 million for Baltimore City and a loss of \$21 million for Baltimore County; statewide, the cut will be \$187- 207 million. Utilities, health care and salary-related expenses will increase. Without the annual inflation increase, school systems will be forced to cut existing programs and services.

Your elected officials need to hear from you let them know that cuts to education funding are not a "solution" to the State's fiscal problem.

Please call or email the Governor today!

Governor Martin O'Malley  
410-974-3901 (This is a local call from the Baltimore area.)

Ask to leave a message, such as:

"Education funding is important to me and my family. Please fully fund Thornton and the mandated inflation increases for education."

[Click here to send an email to the Governor, Senate President and House Speaker.](#)

### The Baltimore Sun: ACLU stands up for education funding

October 4, 2007

In a bluntly worded letter to Gov. Martin O'Malley, the ACLU reminded the governor of his past commitment to education funding and said he could not change the current level of state funding unless he requested a change in the law.

The governor has said he is considering eliminating an "inflation factor" that automatically increases the level of state funding for education each year by the rate of inflation.

A state law passed in 2002, known as Thornton funding, requires increases in education funding through this year and then provides for an increase for inflation in subsequent years.

The inflation factor, the letter said, "is a defined part of the [Thornton] law; eliminating or reducing it will require a change in law."

The ACLU, or American Civil Liberties Union, believes the cuts will amount to a \$148 million reduction in state education funds in the first year.

The letter was signed by Bebe Verdery, director of the ACLU's education reform project, who has followed the state funding issue for more than a decade.

State funding is critical because it provides the majority of funds for some school districts, particularly Baltimore.

[To access the article click here.](#)

## The Examiner: ACLU asks O'Malley to fully fund Thornton

The ACLU pleaded with Gov. Martin O'Malley on Wednesday to not slash \$200 million from the state's landmark school-funding plan.

"We ask that you maintain Maryland's commitment to public school children and uphold the state's constitutional duty to provide them a 'thorough and efficient' education," wrote Bebe Verdery, director of the Education Reform Project at the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, in a letter faxed and mailed to the governor's office.

"We are alarmed by press reports that you plan to cut up to \$207 million of mandated Bridge to Excellence 'Thornton' funding in FY09. This substantial decrease in the required allocation will begin to roll back the Thornton aim of adequacy before some school systems ever receive full funding."

O'Malley has proposed eliminating the plan's inflation increases for two years and then reducing it in the third year.

As a result, Baltimore City schools could lose \$22.6 million and Baltimore County \$19.5 million, according to an ACLU analysis.

"Without an inflation adjustment, school systems will have to cut existing programs and staff to make room in their budgets for locked-in increases in salary, utility and health care costs," Verdery wrote.

Former Prince George's County Board of Education chairman Alvin Thornton headed the commission that led to the 2002 legislation passed in an effort to distribute money more equitably across the state's school districts.

The plan will have pumped an unprecedented \$3.5 billion of state aid into local school districts by the end of the next fiscal year, but the state never determined a funding source.

School systems spent the majority of Thornton funding on salaries, according to a 2006 report prepared for the state.

O'Malley's office did not return a phone call by press time.

[To access the rest of the article you may use this link.](#)

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