



What's In the Mayor's Budget for City Schools?

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Mayor Proposes Small Funding Increase to City Schools; Hearing Thursday at 6pm

Mayor Dixon has proposed \$210 million in direct aid to Baltimore City Public Schools in FY10, a \$1.7 million increase over last year's budget. City funding to the school system has been flat for about ten years, until this year's proposal. Items in the City budget will be before the City Council during the week of May 11th.

The CITY SCHOOLS BUDGET WILL BE HEARD ON THURSDAY, MAY 14th, 6pm, at City Hall. The public is welcome to attend, however, no testimony will be taken during this hearing.

The City, like all school districts statewide, has a "Maintenance of Effort" (MOE) provision mandated by the state. This provision requires Baltimore City to contribute a certain amount of funding to City Schools based on enrollment and prior year funding. Last year, Baltimore City's funding to the schools was \$2.5 million greater than the amount required to maintain its Maintenance of Effort. This year, the Mayor is proposing an increase for City Schools, but no greater than the City is required to give under Moe. The increase in City Schools enrollment led to the .8% increase in City support. It should be said, however, that several other counties (Montgomery, Prince George's, and Wicomico) have applied for a waiver of MOE through the state due to the struggling economy and less local and state revenue. The City did not seek such a waiver.

The City also counts \$61 million in its budget in support of City Schools (non-direct aid to City Schools). This year, the Mayor is proposing about \$800,000 less for the Health/School Nurse Program; there is a slight increase for School Crossing Guards and Retiree Health Benefits. The Community Schools Program is funded at \$729,000, a reduction of 51% from last year. Since that amount will maintain just 15 of the 26 programs, advocates are asking the City to increase funding. Also, there is an increase of about \$8.5 million for debt service, which pays down borrowed money, or bond loans, for school renovation projects and repairs, and new equipment (see Capital Improvement Program below).

Baltimore City's Capital Improvement Program: \$23 Million for City Schools

The Mayor has proposed \$23 million in capital funding for City Schools this year. This represents a moderate increase of about \$5 million from the previous two years, respectively. The State is also contributing \$27.7 million to City Schools for FY10. With the full renovations of Paul L. Dunbar High School and Carver Vocation Technical High School nearly complete, City Schools will focus on 2 major renovation projects; Violetville K-8 School, and Waverly Elementary/Middle School. Leith Walk Elementary School was also slated for a major renovation this year; however, State and City School officials are still debating on the scope of work needed for this facility. Other projects this year include the renovations of several science labs and many systemic projects, which include repairing or replacing fire alarm systems, boilers, and windows and doors.

Although state and local funding for City Schools infrastructure has been higher in recent years, funding is still grossly inadequate. According to a City School's plan released in July 2007, approximately \$1 billion is needed in deferred maintenance and \$2.7 billion is needed to modernize all city school facilities. Both City Schools and the ACLU are conducting independent studies on how Baltimore can use innovative financing structures to significantly increase resources to address the city's aging and outdated school infrastructure problem. Stay tuned for more information on these studies!

Governor signs bills prohibiting suspensions for truancy, class cutting, & tardiness

On May 7, 2009, Governor O' Malley signed two bills into law prohibiting school administrators from suspending students solely for attendance-related offenses. SB 241, sponsored by Senator Catherine Pugh (Baltimore City) and HB 660, sponsored by Delegate Ann Kaiser (Montgomery County), includes class-cutting, truancy, and tardiness as the offenses for which out-of-school suspensions are no longer an option. In the 2007-08 school year, 2,016 Maryland students received out-of-school suspensions for class cutting, 685 for truancy, and 781 students for tardiness. The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention notes that, "Suspending or expelling truants essentially rewards their desire to avoid school, causes them to fall behind in their school work, and does little to encourage more consistent attendance."

The ACLU worked vigorously in favor of both bills during the legislative session. Although Baltimore City Schools policy does not allow suspensions for attendance-related offenses, a small number still occur. Many school systems in Maryland, however, routinely do suspend students for these offenses. The ACLU has advocated for other non-punitive, more effective, options in response to

Attendance related offenses, such as: implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions (PBIS), Early intervention programs, and counseling. The bills will take effect on July 1, 2009 and will Directly affect students beginning in the 2009-10 school year.

Education Reform Project Staff

Bebe Verdery, Education Reform Director
410.889.8550 x 106
verdery@aclu-md.org

JaCina Stanton, Education Reform Advocate
410.889.8550 x 134
stanton@aclu-md.org

Frank Patinella, Education Reform Advocate
410.889.8550 x 123
patinella@aclu-md.org

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland | 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 350 | Baltimore, MD 21211
410.889.8555 (o) | 410.366.7838 (f) | patinella@aclu-md.org | www.aclu-md.org

