



Education Advocate

January 2016

Count on Us!

- What's the bottom line on education issues in the General Assembly?
- What do the Governor's latest actions mean for K-12 education?
- Some say Baltimore schools are gaining money; others say the city school system is losing funding - what's up with that?
- How can I help support kids and schools?



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- hear about Baltimore & Maryland education issues here!

Join us! Maryland's children need you!

ACLU Legislative Priorities for 2016 General Assembly

FAIRLY FUND ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The state budget won't be released until next week but there are early signs that the vigorous advocacy by education advocates and legislators last year made an impression on our new Governor!

Objections to the Governor's underfunding of education continued even after the legislative session, as he withheld \$68 m. in funding that would have avoided cuts to classrooms across the state.

Remarks this week seem to indicate some lessons learned - education is broadly supported across the state! This year's budget might include full funding of the education formula as mandated in law.

But don't get your hopes up too much:

1. The Governor may propose reductions to education funding in future years through weakening of funding mandates.
2. Funding education to the letter of the law doesn't mean all school systems will gain funding - some may lose tens of millions due to shifts in wealth, enrollment loss, etc.

Stay tuned!

Pre-Kindergarten and Community Schools. As the state reexamines the state education funding formula in 2016, the ACLU will educate legislators and promote full funding in the formula for: full-day Pre-K programs for at-risk 4-year-olds and expansion of the promising "community schools" strategy, which incorporates wrap-around services and programs. Research shows that early learning and wrap-around supports leads to better outcomes for students at risk of failure.

ENSURE FUNDING FOR MODERN, SAFE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

For more than a decade, the ACLU has pushed for critical funding to improve school facilities for Baltimore City and other low-wealth districts with inadequate school buildings.

Support City Schools' 21st Century Buildings Program. The state committed 1/3 of the funding - \$20 m./year - for the innovative 2013 Baltimore school construction bill. The approximately \$1 billion generated should renovate/rebuild up to 28 city school buildings in the next 5 years. Join us at the 21st Century Schools Briefing in Annapolis on Friday, Jan. 22, at 1:00 pm in the House Appropriations Committee.

Advocate for a Minimum of \$350 Million for the State School Construction Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Given the estimated \$15 billion needed to renovate and build new schools in the state, the ACLU will advocate for a minimum of \$350 million for school construction statewide, and work to ensure that Baltimore City gets its fair share of the total - 11-12% or an amount comparable to other large school districts.

Protect Other School Construction Programs. The ACLU will also continue to support the Federal Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZABs) and State Aging School Program (ASP) programs and to ensure that these funds - just over \$10 m. annually - are distributed to the most needy districts.

Ensure High Quality School Construction Practices. In December 2015, Senate President Miller and House Speaker Busch announced the "21st Century School Commission" to "maximize [the State's] investment in school facilities in ways that are innovative and forward thinking." The ACLU will work to ensure that any new policy or practice will not compromise the quality of school facilities.

ADVOCATE FOR FAIR & EFFECTIVE STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Recent data on suspensions in Maryland revealed that "for the same type of infraction, Black students had higher rates of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions than did Hispanic or White students." The Education Reform Project will support legislation aimed at reducing disparities in discipline practices and limiting out-of-school suspensions, expulsions and arrests for non-violent incidents. We support policy solutions proven to change outcomes - for example, restorative practices - and oppose measures that would diminish a healthy school climate or criminalize students for child-like mistakes.

NO PUBLIC FUNDING FOR PRIVATE & RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

The ACLU will oppose the use of public dollars to private or religious schools, whether through the state budget, tax credits for private tuition, or school vouchers. Even with cuts to public schools and decrepit public school buildings, the state spends millions of dollars annually on subsidies for books and technology for private schools, as well as for improvements to their buildings. Private and religious schools receiving public dollars are not required to adhere to state accountability standards or follow all state anti-discrimination laws.

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland | Education Reform Project

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