

MDGA22

Right to Education: Improve Funding & End the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Article VIII, Maryland State Constitution:

“The General Assembly...shall by law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance.”

The ACLU of Maryland will advocate with partners for adequate and equitable funding for public education, for comprehensive and disaggregated data for school suspensions and discipline, and for safe, healthy, modern school buildings.

ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

At the beginning of the 2021 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly overrode Governor Hogan’s veto of the \$4 billion

education reform bill, “Blueprint for Maryland’s Future” (aka “Kirwan”). While the ACLU and partners successfully advocated for speeding up funding over the intended 10-year phase-in period, we have identified areas of the Blueprint that need improvements and have additional questions:

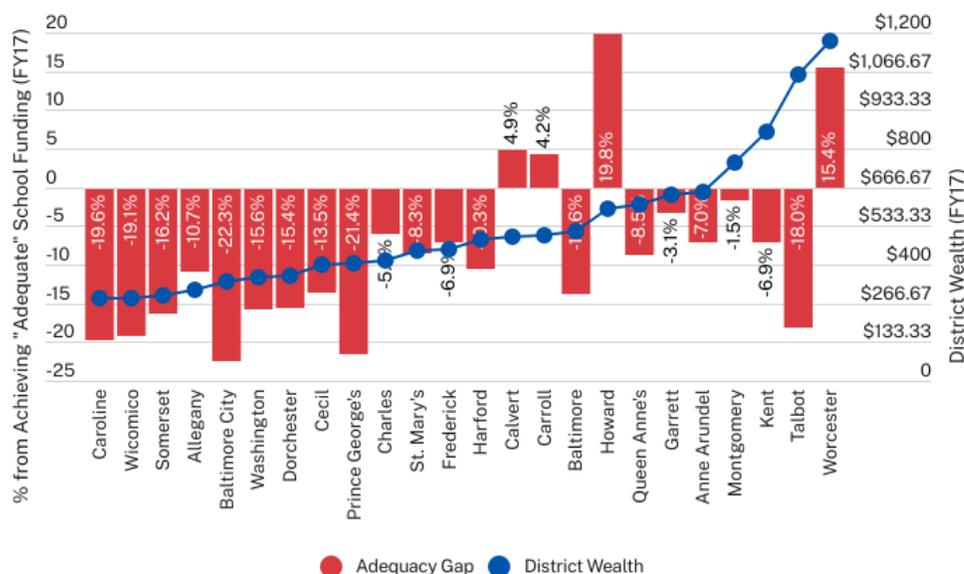
- The ACLU will continue working in coalition to ensure that the new dollars planned for this coming school year can be used to address the most pressing needs of students, especially for Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color, students from families with low income, and students with special education needs.
- The state has identified revenue to fund the first five years of the total amount called for in the bill. The ACLU will support coalition efforts to generate more revenue to fully fund the bill.
- The ACLU will ask for an “adequacy” analysis of the Blueprint funding formula to determine if it will meet the standard of funding “adequacy” as guaranteed by the state constitution.



Maryland District Wealth & Education Funding "Adequacy" Gap

Maryland districts that have the lowest wealth are also the furthest from achieving "adequate" education funding.

ACLU Maryland



SOURCES: DLS - Adequacy of Education Funding in Maryland Since 2002 (2019); DLS - Overview of Maryland Local Governments - Finances and Demographic Information (2017)

COMPREHENSIVE AND DISAGGREGATED DATA FOR SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND DISCIPLINE

Transparency is critical to ensure that schools are not needlessly suspending students for routine behavioral infractions, and instead, using restorative approaches to teach students how to effectively manage their emotions.

As part of the effort to end the school-to-prison pipeline, the ACLU will support HB171 - School Discipline - Data Collection - which is a bill introduced during the 2021 legislative session but was not brought to the floor for a vote. This bill will require the Maryland State Department of Education to publish reports on discipline-related data - disaggregated for race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, socioeconomic status and English language proficiency - for every school in the state.

MARYLAND NEEDS SAFE, HEALTHY, AND MODERN SCHOOL FACILITIES

Based on school district assessments, the state estimated that, statewide, public school facilities need more than \$20 billion to address

all deficiencies. Over recent years, the state has increased school facilities funding, and the ACLU will work to maintain these programs which are estimated to provide nearly \$6 billion for school districts statewide over the next decade. This \$6 billion from the state is significant but what we need is sustained high levels of funding in subsequent years to make sure school facilities throughout Maryland are safe, healthy, and equipped for 21st Century learning. Our legislators must prioritize districts with facilities with the greatest deficiencies and equitably distributing these funds.

The ACLU will also work to ensure that the statewide school facilities assessment - which was completed recently - is reviewed for comprehensiveness and accuracy to ensure that school buildings in the worst condition, and in the districts with the lowest wealth, get prioritized in the new School Facilities Priority Fund. We expect legislation this session to address outstanding issues related to the assessment.