

Maryland Education Coalition

The Maryland Education Coalition is dedicated to raising the academic achievement of students in Maryland public schools by promoting adequate funding and systemic accountability for improving results.

House Appropriations Committee Testimony in Support of House Bill 860: Baltimore City Public Construction Authority Funding

March 5, 2013

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The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) fights for adequate, equitable funding and systemic accountability because every child deserves a quality education and because achievement gaps must be closed.

School facilities in Baltimore City are in dire condition. Many lack reliable heat, appropriate air circulation and cooling, potable drinking water, or the electrical infrastructure to support technology such as computers and projectors in classrooms. These conditions put Baltimore City students at a disadvantage compared to their peers in healthy and modern buildings. School facilities are as important to the success of students as are quality teaching and access to basic supplies such as books. Poor lighting and indoor air quality lead to higher rates of sickness and absenteeism in buildings resulting in the loss of precious classroom time for students. Building conditions also have an effect on teachers and staff who experience similar health problems as the students in buildings in poor condition, inevitably resulting in difficulty retaining good teachers.

HB 860 allows the school system to use their state funding allotment, combined with local resources, in an alternative financing model. In the fall of 2012, Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) released a 10-year plan that includes using funds from the alternative financing model to build, renovate, consolidate, and close schools. Without alternative financing, the city is looking at more than 50 years before all the fixes that are currently needed are completed which realistically means the students of Baltimore City will never have facilities on par with their peers in other jurisdictions.

MEC is a statewide coalition and advocates for all students across Maryland. In order to ensure other counties are unaffected by the bill, MEC supports the \$32 million lock-in. This amount is the lower average that the city has received from the state, even during the economic crisis. In addition, MEC fully supports using an authority to oversee that funding is used properly and is maximized.

The time to fix Maryland's oldest public schools is now. The bill provides a smarter avenue to using current state dollars that will ensure more of our children have a chance at success.

MEC encourages a favorable report on House Bill 860.

8 Market Place, 5th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Phone: 410-547-9200
Fax: 410-547-8690