



**Testimony for the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee**

February 4, 2020

**SB 275 – Education- Community and Local Accountability for
Struggling Schools (CLASS) Act of 2020- Innovation Schools**

JUSTIN NALLEY
POLICY ANALYST,
EDUCATION

OPPOSED

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
OF MARYLAND

MAIN OFFICE
& MAILING ADDRESS
3600 CLIPPER MILL ROAD
SUITE 350
BALTIMORE, MD 21211
T/410-889-8555
or 240-274-5295
F/410-366-7838

FIELD OFFICE
6930 CARROLL AVENUE
SUITE 610
TAKOMA PARK, MD 20912
T/240-274-5295

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
JOHN HENDERSON
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS SHELLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland opposes SB 275, which would allow a county board to designate as an innovation school, a school that has been given one star under the star rating system for at least the previous 2 consecutive school years.

This bill unjustly targets a small number of Baltimore City and Prince George's County schools by proposing unreasonable oversight and mechanisms that force undue administrative burdens on the Superintendent, teacher unions, parents, and principals. According to the Department of Legislative Services and Maryland Department of Education, Maryland's Accountability System, only 14 schools or 1.0% of the 1,318 Maryland schools received a one-star rating in the previous two consecutive years.¹

Of these 14 schools, 64% (9 schools) are located in Baltimore City and Prince George's County. According to the state's own analysis, Baltimore City and Prince George's County have the largest fiscal adequacy gap, with \$846 million combined being needed to provide an adequate education to students as of fiscal year 2017.²

This bill undermines the work of the Commission of Innovation and Excellence in Education, which has spent the past several years studying the adequacy gaps in our schools and recently issued policy recommendations to provide more resources to schools, so that no school will be receiving a one star rating. Without the opportunity for these resources to be administered to districts, placing designations on schools outside the recommended policy framework is counterproductive to the work of the Commission and a waste of state resources.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges an unfavorable report.

¹ http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/fnotes/bil_0005/sb0275.pdf

² http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabMtg/CmsnInnovEduc/2019_08_01_FollowupfromJuly24meetingdraft.pdf

