

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
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of School Commissioners

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Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Support of House Bill 1290
Education – Public School Construction –
Funding and Administration**

March 1, 2022

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports House Bill 1290 because it recognizes the significant need for increased State funding for public school construction for those school districts with the most need.

City Schools is home to the oldest public school buildings in the state. Many buildings have inadequate heating and cooling systems, roofing, windows, and piping systems. We are also the school district with the neediest children that are in schools designated with high concentration of poverty. Given the critical needs of our aging infrastructure, we support House Bill 1290 for the positive impact it will have on the district.

In 2019, at then current market value, we estimated the cost at \$4 billion to fully replace the aging facilities. Under the current Capital Improvement Program (CIP), City Schools distills the large number of systemic replacement needs each year to identify \$70-\$90M in CIP requests for the very highest priority projects. However, we only receive approximately \$48M combined from the City and State (\$19M from Baltimore City and approximately \$29M from the State) – addressing about 1% of the estimated systemic and facility replacement needs. Clearly, current funding levels pale in comparison to the unmet need and merely allow City Schools to address a portion of our most urgent building challenges.

The City Schools community has advocated for nearly a decade for resources to provide students with the school buildings they need and deserve. With support from the Maryland General Assembly, the success of that advocacy resulted in the 21st Century School Buildings Program. Through that program, the State, the City of Baltimore and Baltimore City Schools contribute \$60 million annually that is financing renovation or replacement of 28 facilities that house both traditional and charter schools. However, those funds are only enough to renovate or replace a fraction of the district's schools. We still have more than 100 buildings remaining in our portfolio housing both traditional and charter schools that have significant capital and repair needs.

The Built to Learn Act, passed by this body is also another area in which the school system will be able to use funding to renovate a few of our aging high schools. The Board thanks the General Assembly for all that it has done to help our aging infrastructure.

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This legislation will allow for, among other items, an increased state share of school construction projects to allow the school system to have more funds available for school construction projects. Continuing the Healthy School Facility Fund through 2026 is also necessary for City Schools to continue to help it provide appropriate buildings for students to learn.

We ask that the legislation also allow for not only major renovation projects, but also systemics, as most of our school construction projects in City Schools are systemics, due to the amount of funding available to the school system. We also ask that total repair cost needs take into account the cost of repair to individual components (not just the high level system) and needs to account for systems that should be present but are not (such as a full HVAC system). Otherwise, the Facility Condition Index may be misrepresented.

In closing, given the overwhelming evidence documenting the critical needs of our aging infrastructure, City Schools feels strongly that any public school construction funding actions taken by the General Assembly during Session 2022 should be prioritized toward districts with the greatest demonstrated needs.

Thank you for your consideration in addressing the capital needs of Baltimore City Public Schools. For all these reasons, we urge a favorable report of House Bill 1290.

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