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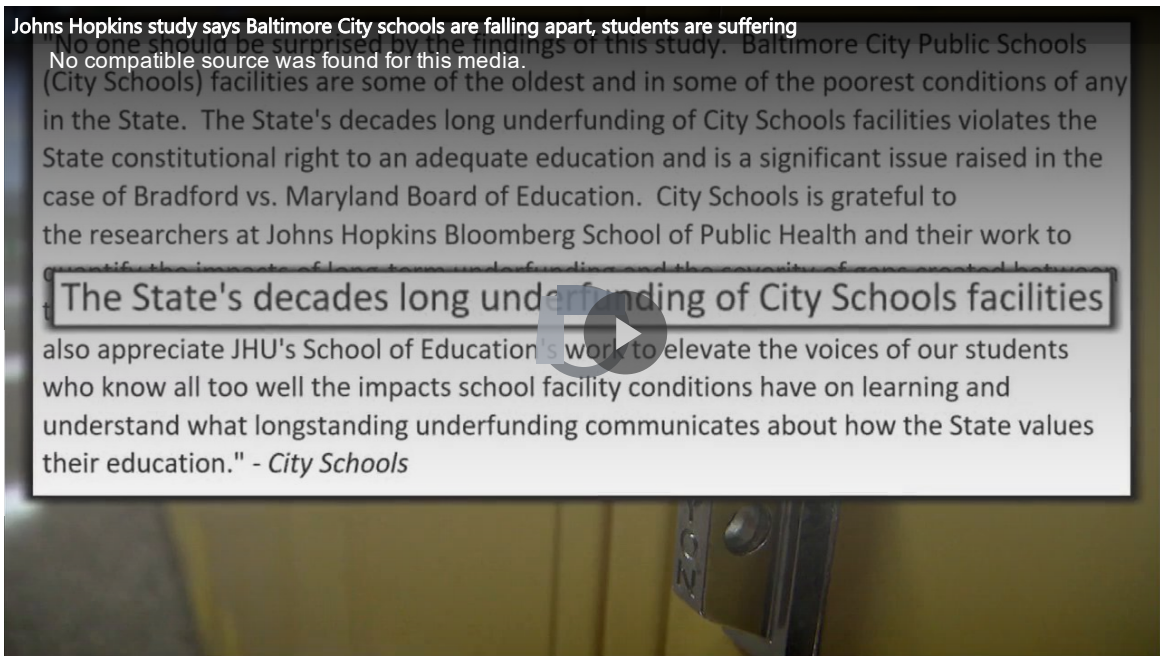


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Johns Hopkins study says Baltimore City schools are falling apart, students are suffering

Rebecca Pryor · 9/23/2022



A new Johns Hopkins study shows Baltimore city school buildings are failing in almost every category.

"This is a school system in desperate need with the worst conditions," said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, vice dean for public health practice and community engagement at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and one of the study's authors.

Sharfstein says the team analyzed data from a state investigation comparing city schools to the county. The disparities were drastic

"There shouldn't be this huge difference just driving across the county line in whether this school or schools that you can be proud of or schools that you're embarrassed by," he said.

They estimate about 50 city school buildings are practically falling apart, leading by far and away, the most health hazards of any other district.

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Everything from broken A/C units to leaking ceilings, adds up to around \$141 million in needed repairs.

At the end of the day, he says it's the children paying the price.

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"It affects their self-esteem, and affects their ability to go to school because the school is not open because there's something broken, and it affects their health in many ways. So, this is a pretty serious issue," he said.

A lack of functioning heating and cooling systems alone cost kids 1.2 million hours of lost school time over a five year span.

The study also included direct quotes from students. One writing, "Not having air conditioning, you cannot focus when it's 80 degrees and you're sitting down just like... I mean, I sweat a lot. So I would be sweating in class. It was terrible going to school."

"My half sister went to high school in [another Maryland county]. They had really nice stuff, and I always wanted her to know how bad we had it. I just felt like it didn't make sense that one district in Maryland should have a significantly better schooling experience than we were," wrote another.

The city's 21st century buildings program is offering some relief,

however, "It's just not enough," said Sharfstein, "This kind of gap, this treatment of Baltimore City school kids is unacceptable."

When asked to comment, city schools blamed the poor conditions on underfunding, sending FOX 45 the following statement:

"No one should be surprised by the findings of this study. Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) facilities are some of the oldest and in some of the poorest conditions of any in the State. The State's decades long underfunding of City Schools facilities violates the State constitutional right to an adequate education and is a significant issue raised in the case of Bradford vs. Maryland Board of Education. City Schools is grateful to the researchers at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and their work to quantify the impacts of long-term underfunding and the severity of gaps created between the condition of school facilities in City Schools versus those elsewhere in the State. We also appreciate JHU's School of Education's work to elevate the voices of our students who know all too well the impacts school facility conditions have on learning and understand what longstanding underfunding communicates about how the State values their education." - City Schools

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"To hear that they don't have enough money for infrastructure doesn't make sense to anybody," said Taxpayers Protection Alliance President, David Williams.

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Williams argues more money from the state isn't the answer.

"This is about the funds going to the wrong purposes," he said.

The school's current \$1.6 billion budget comes out to more than \$21,000 being spent per student.

So, despite significant disparities in the city's capital projects funding, city schools remain some of the highest funded in the nation.

"They need to find a way to shift part of the \$1.6 billion dollars to capital projects so that taxpayers aren't on the hook for more money," said Williams.

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