

Letter of Information
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Senate Bill 851
Public Schools – Individuals with Disabilities –
Main Entrance Accessibility and Emergency Planning

March 5, 2025

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners understands the need to ensure that all students, staff and visitors to public schools have access to school buildings. As school buildings are renovated in Baltimore City, accessibility is in the forefront of those renovations. The Board would encourage the Maryland General Assembly to provide additional funding, outside of the Capital improvement Program (CIP) to allow for funds to be used specifically to address any accessibility issues and related findings.

City Schools estimates that more than \$3.86 billion (in today's dollars) is needed to bring all City Schools school buildings up to minimally acceptable standards through repairs and replacements to the remaining facilities that are still in need of a complete overhaul due to their age and conditions, even after the 21st Century School Buildings Program and the Built to Learn Act of 2020 have been fully implemented.

With the 21st Century School Buildings Program, the school board pays approximately \$20 million dollars, per year, in bond payments in order to support the construction of those newly renovated buildings; \$20 million that could have been used for instruction, interventions and other school related teaching expenses. Charter schools have the same ability to seek funding for facility issues from outside entities and pay for those costs.

Also, given current inflationary pressures on construction costs, there is ample evidence that facility issues within City Schools is even more concerning and the \$3.86 billion significantly underestimates the full costs of addressing these unmet systemic facility renovation needs, and that even more funding would be required to complete a full portfolio replacement to the educational standards recommended by the IAC, and utilized by other school districts in Maryland and across the nation.

The Board knows the importance of accessibility and is hopeful that the General Assembly will not only want a list of schools with accessibility issues, but provide funding once identified in order to cure the accessibility issues.

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