

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Support of House Bill 1329 –
Education – Public School Construction – Funding**

March 11, 2026

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports House Bill 1329 as a step toward providing adequate school construction funding to public schools in the State.

The legislation would require that, beginning in FY 2027 that the State provide at least \$550,000,000 each year for public school construction and makes it clear that funding provided through the Built to Learn Program is in addition to the \$550,000,000 in this legislation.

Baltimore City has the oldest building stock within the State. Even with the Built to Learn Program and the 21st Century Buildings Program, the City School building portfolio is in desperate need of additional funding. Additionally, the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) has publicly stated through testimony before the General Assembly that the current public school construction funding is not enough to adequately address the building conditions around the State. Despite the current school construction funding, public school buildings conditions around the State are getting more inadequate.

It is well-established that City Schools faces significant capital needs for the school system's buildings. In addition, City Schools is a district that is regularly closing and merging schools, as well as returning buildings via surplus to the City of Baltimore, because of the inability to adequately support facility needs. 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.

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.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners urges a favorable report.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.
Executive Director, Legislative and Government Affairs
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
443-250-0190