

Transform Baltimore

Build Schools. Build Neighborhoods.

November 3, 2011

Dear Mayor Rawlings-Blake:

Thank you for meeting with representatives of the Transform Baltimore campaign today. Below is the list of issues we are bringing to you, so that you have them in writing. We were pleased when you established the School Construction Task Force, a group charged with devising a plan to meet the \$2.8 billion school facilities' need. We thank you for your efforts in the General Assembly to secure additional state aid by getting credit for the City's funding of the retiree health benefits, which we understand will be used for school construction going forward.

To get to \$2.8 billion, we need to be able to leverage the current school construction funding streams (as Greenville, SC, did, to rebuild all of its schools in 5-6 years), plus have new revenue sources to increase the amount that can be leveraged. The first \$1 billion of the total need can be done with existing streams of funding, using a non-profit to sell bonds, borrowing enough up-front to renovate a large percentage of City school buildings in a short time, and using about \$60 million in current annual school construction funds to pay off the debt over 25-30 years. This is what we need the City to do to support a Greenville-style model:

- Change the process for distributing City capital funds for school construction so that the funds are delivered in a flexible and stable manner and can go to the non-profit organization to service the bonds
- Work out an MOU regarding school building property interest, if needed
- Lobby the state to distribute State capital school construction funds flexibly in a similar manner.

The Transform Baltimore campaign would like to know if you will work with the school system to set up a plan similar to Greenville's and when you can have an answer as to whether you will work toward this plan.

The Greenville financing using current revenue streams is a large first step, will create momentum, and allow new schools to be built. But for the rest of the plan to get done, Transform Baltimore also asks you to:

- Increase annual City capital contribution to school construction from \$17 million back up to \$20 million
- Devote the city's share of slots revenue to school construction, or other revenue of the same size, to be leveraged
- Advocate for an increase in state school construction aid

ACLU of Maryland
Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Education Coalition
Baltimore Freedom Academy
Baltimore's Safe and Sound Campaign
Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development
Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy
Child First Authority
Citizens Planning and Housing Association
City Neighbors Foundation Council
Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance
Elev8
Episcopal Cathedral of the Incarnation
The Fund for Educational Excellence
Gethsamene AME Church
Greater Homewood Community Corporation
League of Women Voters of Baltimore City
Roland Park Elementary / Middle PTA
Supporting Public Schools of Choice

- Advocate at the state level for one-cent optional sales tax (by local referendum) for the City or any county that wants it

We would like to see the Task Force report with these components issued before the holidays, by December 15, so that we can report out to our larger coalition in early January and tell them what actions the City is taking to work toward the \$2.8 billion financing plan.

The Transform Baltimore campaign is committed to working with you, City Schools, and the state to make modernized schools in Baltimore a reality!

Sincerely,

For the Transform Baltimore campaign:

Shannen Coleman, Baltimore Education Coalition Co-Chair & Child First Authority
Sue Fothergill, Baltimore Education Coalition Co-Chair & City Neighbors Foundation Council
Bebe Verdery, ACLU of Maryland Education Reform Project
Frank Patinella, ACLU of Maryland Education Reform Project
Karen DeCamp, Greater Homewood Community Corporation
Nicole Johnson, Elev8
Terrell Williams, Teacher, Holabird Academy
Pearlene Coleman, Northwestern High School Alumni Association
Briauna Wills, Baltimore Freedom Academy