

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education

On March 7, 2019, a group of concerned parents joined by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the ACLU of Maryland returned to court to reopen the historic Bradford vs. Maryland State Board of Education case to ensure that another generation of Black and Latinx students in Baltimore are not held back from realizing their dreams due to unconstitutional and inequitable education funding.

See below for some quick facts about the case, what it means for Baltimore school children, and why it is important.

1

The Maryland Constitution Guarantees Every Child in Maryland the Right to an Adequate Education.

Article VIII of the Maryland Constitution explicitly guarantees every child in the state a through and efficient education. By law, all Maryland students must receive an education that is adequate according to current, modern standards. If a child in any one part of the state is receiving an education that falls below this standard, it violates the Maryland Constitution.

2

Maryland Owes the City of Baltimore at Least \$3 Billion to Fix its Schools and an Additional \$300 Million Annually for Instruction.

In 2012, Maryland ordered a comprehensive review of all Baltimore school facilities. The review found that 85 percent of school buildings were in “poor” or “very poor” condition. Schools often lack functional heat, air conditioning, drinkable water, and security features, as well as having dilapidated elevators that routinely break and structures that are well beyond their useful lives. This is on top of annual funding shortages for instruction. City officials estimate that Maryland may owe more than the \$300 million suggested by the State’s data given the additional funding needed to make up for the history of underfunding, inflation, and increased education costs.

3

It Has Been Over a Decade Since the State Adequately Funded Baltimore City Schools, in Defiance of Multiple Court Orders.

Although the Court issued multiple decisions from 1996 to 2004 calling on the State to adequately fund Baltimore city schools, Maryland has repeatedly ignored its obligations. It has been over a decade since the State even came close to meeting the Court’s benchmark.

4

The State’s Funding Failures Have Severely Hurt Baltimore Schools and Students.

According to the State Report Card, which rates schools from one to five stars, Baltimore had 23 schools that received only one star, almost twice the number of one-star schools in every other Maryland school district combined. Only 3 percent of schools statewide received the lowest rating, and 66 percent of these schools (23 of 35) were in Baltimore city. Altogether, almost 60 percent of Baltimore city schools received only one or two stars (99 of 166 schools)—not only the largest percentage in the State, but more than eight times the percentage for the rest of the State. Although three and four-star ratings were by far the most common statewide, only 39 percent of Baltimore city schools received that rating as compared to 74 percent of schools in the rest of the state.

5

African-American Students are Predominantly Harmed by the State’s Failure.

The Baltimore region is highly segregated, which is reflected in the racial composition of the city’s public schools. Accordingly, the State’s failure to fund Baltimore city schools sufficiently has denied an adequate education to a significant proportion of Maryland’s African-American student population. Approximately 79 percent of Baltimore city public school students are Black—the highest percentage in the state. As of 2015, 53 percent of African-American students in Maryland attended chronically underfunded schools, compared to just 8 percent of white students across the state.