

12-0066R

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Neil E. Duke, Esq.
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

September 25, 2012

The Honorable Bernard C. "Jack" Young
President, Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: Position Statement
City Council Bill (Resolution) 12-0066R

Dear Council President Young:

On September 12, 2012 the Baltimore City Council introduced the above-captioned resolution, calling for an informational hearing and roundtable discussion on developments affecting the education of older teens and young adults in Baltimore City.

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) is committed to helping all students earn a high school diploma. We unequivocally maintain that there are no "disposable" kids, and we are making a concerted effort to provide for the individual needs – however complex – of every student in Baltimore City.

City Schools does not offer GED services, which are currently offered by the state. We understand that legislation passed this past session that requires DLLR and MSDE to develop regulations. We will happily work with the appropriate agencies in order to maximize benefits to teens, young adults and the school district.

City Schools' Alternative Option Programs already target all students up to the age of 20, regardless of legally mandated attendance. Consequently, our alternative programs will not be substantially affected by the increase in mandatory school attendance age. To the extent that the mandatory age increase causes more students to be enrolled in Alternative Option Programs, staffing may need to be increased or additional programs created. City Schools' outreach to disengaged students is not limited to those legally mandated to attend school.

Attendance enforcement may require additional staffing by City Schools to engage 17 and 18-year-old students and their families affected by the increase in the mandatory attendance age.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express our views on this issue.



Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

C: Dawana Sterrette
Legislative Liaison

#6037(2)



Comments

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Testimony of Karen Webber N'Dour on behalf of Dr. Andrés A. Alonso, Chief Executive Officer of Baltimore City Public Schools, in response to City Council Bill (Resolution) 12-0066R

I would first like to thank Councilperson Mary Pat Clarke for introducing such an important piece of legislation and allowing this opportunity to present the views of Baltimore City Public Schools on City Council Bill (Resolution) 12-0066R, regarding developments affecting the education of older teens and young adults in Baltimore City.

City Schools is committed to helping all students earn a high school diploma. We unequivocally maintain that there are no “disposable” kids. Students drop out of school for a wide range of reasons, and we have made a concerted effort to provide for the individual needs – however complex – of every student in Baltimore City.

- City Schools’ “Great Kids Come Back” initiative is emblematic of this process. Throughout the year, our high schools are instructed to contact every student who drops out or fails to attend school, to encourage them and their families to re-engage with education and earn a high school diploma. The key element in the success of this program is that – with the assistance of appropriate agencies in Baltimore City – we offer a wide range of supports and services, including employment connections, counseling, substance abuse programs, childcare and transportation.
- Since 2007, City Schools has more than doubled the number of Alternative Option Program seats to provide over-age or under-credited students with the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. We have also opened Accelerator Schools, to give discouraged over-age students in danger of dropping out – or those who may have already dropped out – the opportunity to finish their high school graduation requirements in two years rather than four. Finally, City Schools is making a consistent effort to decrease chronic student absenteeism, and we have also decreased student suspensions by 32 percent since 2007.
- In the five-year period since the 2006-07 school year we have reduced dropouts by more than 55 percent, while increasing graduation rates by nearly 20 percent. Significantly, these improvements were led by a 58 percent reduction in dropouts and a 26 percent increase in graduation by our African-American male students.

**GREAT KIDS
GREAT SCHOOLS**

With regard to the specific areas of interest contained in Resolution 12-0066(R), City Schools responds as follows:

GED Services:

City Schools does not offer GED services, which are currently offered by the state. We understand that legislation passed this past session that requires DLLR and MSDE to develop regulations. We will happily work with the appropriate agencies in order to maximize benefits to teens, young adults and the school district.

Higher Mandated Age for School Attendance:

- City Schools' Alternative Option Programs already target all students up to the age of 20, regardless of legally mandated attendance. Consequently, our alternative programs will not be substantially affected by the increase in mandatory school attendance age. To the extent that the mandatory age increase causes more students to be enrolled in alternative option programs, staffing may need to be increased or additional programs created. As described earlier, City Schools' outreach to disengaged students is not limited to those legally mandated to attend school.
- Attendance enforcement may require additional staffing by City Schools to engage 17 and 18-year-old students and their families affected by the increase in the mandatory attendance age.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present our views. City Schools will be happy to provide any needed additional information.