

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Bernard C. “Jack” Young
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Linda Chinnia
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

Letter of Information
Baltimore City Council Resolution 20-0213R
COVID-19 Emergency Spending

May 12, 2020

As drafted, Council Resolution 20-0213R requests the Director of the Department of Finance and other agency representatives provide the City Council with an update on COVID-19 emergency spending. At the time of the writing of this report, the coronavirus pandemic continues to present significant fiscal implications for the Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools).

While the district has made extraordinary efforts and garnered national attention for its leadership in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the resource needs continue to be substantial. Building on our base of 15,000 Chromebooks in schools, the district incurred a cost of more than \$4 million to purchase 12,200 additional chrome books to achieve a districtwide inventory of approximately 27,000 Chromebooks. In addition, while device distribution has reduced the number of students with limited or no internet access, City Schools continues to expend significant resources to distribute approximately 12,000 paper copies of work packets weekly at food distribution sites.

City Schools is grateful for the recently approved \$3 million from the Mayor and City Council toward the critical distance learning needs of our students during these unprecedented times. The \$3 million from the City is a much-needed support to students and families and will allow City Schools to provide Chromebooks to more students, as well as assist with identifying long-term, sustainable options for connecting to the internet.

In addition to the costs associated with distance learning needs, it is important to understand that without additional funding, City Schools expects to lose an estimated \$15 to \$20 million from food service operations in the 2019-2020 school year, while schools are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (and this number is expected to increase considerably if school closures or partial closures continue into the 2020-2021 school year). These fiscal deficits will mitigate the district’s ability to proactively invest in education recovery efforts, even as Baltimore City Public Schools’ food service operation is in overdrive to accommodate the tremendous demand for meals for students in need.

While federal funding is expected to become available through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, City Schools will continue to be in a recovery mode when the CARES Act funds finally are distributed, and there are significant and entirely unanticipated expenditures that will become necessary for the coming 2020-2021 school year, regardless of whether schools remain closed entirely, re-open on a limited basis, or operate on a regular schedule

with robust social distancing. For example, large quantities of personal protective equipment will be needed, and there will be increased costs to meet heightened cleaning and sanitizing requirements, as well as to provide academic tutoring and supports to assist with educational recovery for all students, and especially for students with disabilities, English language learners, and homeless students, among others.

Finally, it should be noted that the Governor's recent decision to veto the Kirwan legislation (*i.e.*, HB 1300 – Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation) only presents further fiscal uncertainty for the district. For all of these reasons, we appreciate the Baltimore City Council's attention to this important issue and look forward to further discussion.

For additional information, please contact City Schools Government Affairs:

Melissa Broome
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs
MCBroome@bcps.k12.md.us
(443) 525-3038

Dawana Sterrette
Director of Legislative and Government Affairs
DSterrette@bcps.k12.md.us
(443) 250-0190