

additional years. Further, Baltimore City was required to complete six corrective actions in 2003 based on its standing as a school system in the Corrective Action status. The corrective actions were designed to help remedy the school system's continuing deficiencies. The City reported that it did not complete all six corrective actions as required.

The Maryland State Board of Education identified the 11 schools as low performing in 1997 or earlier. When the schools were identified, the Baltimore City Public School System was informed that under the State's educational accountability system the identified schools were subject to State intervention, including removing the schools from City oversight, if achievement did not improve. Maryland's educational accountability system – which is still in place but jeopardized by this bill – was initiated by Governor Schaefer's Commission on School Performance and predates the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* by a decade.

Baltimore City has had several years to improve achievement in these 11 schools, but little or no progress has been made despite the fact that Baltimore City receives more State funding per pupil than any other jurisdiction. In the four high schools identified for alternative governance, achievement and graduation prospects for students are dismal. Since 1994 an estimated 10,000 students have dropped out of these four schools. On the average, students are absent 36 days, or over seven weeks, per year. An overwhelming majority of students have failed the High School Assessments. In Southwestern's freshman class of 2005, an estimated 99 students out of 100 will not pass the High School Assessments because they cannot read or because they do not understand math. At Frederick Douglass, only 1.4 percent of students passed the High School Assessment in biology and only 4.8 percent passed the High School Assessment in algebra. Clearly, the data present a call to action that the State of Maryland cannot ignore.

Further, we all should be deeply troubled that House Bill 1215 will prevent the State from executing its responsibilities under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* and State school accountability regulations. An inability to intervene in low-performing schools with "a major restructuring of a governance arrangement" strikes at the heart of accountability. According to the U.S. Department of Education, if this bill becomes law, \$171 Million in federal Title I funding for all jurisdictions in Maryland may be jeopardized, and the net effect could be a loss of learning opportunities for children in Baltimore City and across Maryland. I cannot permit that to happen.

I reference the enduring words of the 1989 Governor's Commission on School Performance:

- * All children can learn.
- * All children have the right to attend schools in which they can progress and learn.
- * All children shall have a real opportunity to learn equally rigorous content.

For children in the 11 schools identified for alternative governance, these are broken promises.

Baltimore City has had ample opportunity to improve these schools. The children