



February 12, 2008

**Testimony to House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development**

**By Darryl Smith**

Re: Public School Construction Program Budget

As a parent of four students in the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), I strongly support full funding of the state's Capital Improvement Program, Aging Schools Program, and the facilities survey. The public school construction funds received from the state has been significantly effective for improving the lives of Baltimore City students.

Two of my daughters attend John Eager Howard Elementary School, where I serve at the Parent-Teacher-Community Association president. Before improvements were made, the school was in poor condition; paint was peeling from the walls, the gym floor was in disrepair, and the windows and doors were deteriorating, which adversely affected the health, safety, and learning of the students. Within the past two years, John Eager Howard received new windows and doors, which significantly improved the ability of students to concentrate, as they no longer had to wear sweaters and hoodies in the classroom. The building is also much more secure with the improvements funded by the state's Capital Improvement Program.

For years, the John Eager Howard gym floor was in disrepair and the paint was peeling from the walls. Fortunately, the Aging Schools Program provided the funds necessary to replace the gym floor and paint the walls. Now, students benefit from having a nice recreational room for sports and other physical activities that are crucial to youth development. Further, the school gym serves the greater community on a daily basis, hosting quality afterschool recreational programs for both youth and adults. These recreational programs are an indispensable part of the intervention programs implemented by the school and community groups to keep youth and young adults off the street. Further, the improvements at the school sent a message of positive change to the community, making it easier to recruit parents and community members to get involved with the school.

Through a partnership with the Parent-Teacher-Community Association and the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council, the local community association, we were able to

help further beautify the school by painting walls in some of the hallways and classrooms with donated materials and volunteer labor. Through a partnership with the Department of Recreation and Parks and the local businesses, we were able to restore the neighboring city-owned park and plant nearly two dozen trees around the school.

John Eager Howard parents and the surrounding community greatly appreciate the state's Capital Improvement Program and Aging Schools Program. It has significantly contributed to the lives of the students, school staff, and surrounding community members. I urge you to not make any cuts to the Capital Improvement Program or the Aging Schools Program. In fact, since so many schools in Baltimore City are greatly improved by these programs, I urge you to seek an increase in funding for these two highly valued and effective programs.

Thank you for your time and your service to the students and families of Baltimore City and the state of Maryland.

Darryl Smith  
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Community Organizer, Reservoir Hill Improvement Council