



Good afternoon, Chairman Kasemeyer and Members of the Committee. My name is Maria Filardi. I am here to testify in opposition to the proposed cuts to education funding in the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act.

I am here today in two capacities. I am here as acting Executive Director for the Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance, a non-profit member organization that seeks to make Baltimore a place where families thrive. DBFA's members consist of Baltimore city parents, predominantly from the downtown area, as well as others who share our mission. The Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance is a proud member of the Baltimore Education Coalition. Today I represent DBFA's members, as well as every downtown parent, to emphasize to you that excellent public schools are absolutely critical to our city community. As involved citizens and concerned parents we look to you to continue to prioritize educational opportunities for our children in our state's budget.

I am also here as a parent of two Baltimore public school students, my son Peter, in 2nd grade and my daughter Ella in 4th grade. As a parent, I thank this body for its part in passing the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act in 2002. At that time my daughter was one year old. Frankly, I was more worried about her having a good nap than good schooling. Your promise that each child, no matter where the child grows up, be it suburb, country or city, would be able to attend a good school - a school that has what each student needs to achieve --made it possible for my children to attend their well-run public elementary school today. A city school in which my children and their classmates are learning on pace and not lagging behind suburban peers. Peter, Ella and their classmates are the growing product of a school system that is on an upswing, thanks in no small part due to the 2002 Bridge to Excellence promise and your investment in our children.

The Downtown Baltimore Family Alliance appreciates that the state is facing a large shortfall and the budget must be brought in balance. DBFA appreciates that tough promises made in good times, are harder to keep in the bad times. On behalf of our members, I ask you today to keep your resolve and your promise. Let Maryland continue to lead the nation in prioritizing adequate public education for all its students. These students will one day be Maryland's scientists, businesspeople, teachers, artists and leaders. The investment is worth it.

I urge you to seek out the governor and work with him to find the \$94 million to fund education in the 2011-2012 school year, and prevent the permanent cut to the per pupil funding formula. For Baltimore and Baltimore's children, please keep Thorton funded.

Thank you,

Maria Filardi
DBFA, Interim Executive Director