

ARKANSAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ACADEMIC FACILITIES OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Senator Joyce Elliott
Senate Co-Chair

Representative James McLean
House Co-Chair

MEMORANDUM

To: The Senate Interim Committee on Education
The House Interim Committee on Education

From: Senator Joyce Elliott, Co-Chair
Representative James McLean, Co-Chair
Academic Facilities Oversight Committee

Subject: Recommendations Regarding Adequacy Issues Related to Academic Facilities

Date: October 14, 2014

At their meeting on Thursday, October 9, 2014, the members of the Academic Facilities Oversight Committee reviewed two (2) statutorily requested reports from the Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation (DPSAFT) and discussed facilities issues related to Adequacy.

After an extensive discussion, the Committee adopted the following motions related to Adequacy:

Pursuant to the motion of Representative Baltz, which was seconded by Senator Pierce, the Academic Facilities Oversight Committee, voted to recommend that the House Interim Committee on Education and the Senate Interim Committee on Education review the following facilities issues as they relate to Adequacy:

- Districts' requests for Partnership Program funding typically exceed the new General Revenue the program receives each year. Until now, the Program has been sustained by carryover funding from the original \$456 million the General Assembly provided in 2007. That funding has been depleted, and the Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation estimates there could be a \$65 million funding shortfall for the 2015-17 funding cycle. The problem has been exacerbated by the fact that about \$16.3 million that previously supported the Partnership Program has been redirected to the Public School Employees Health Insurance Plan.*
- There has been some concern expressed about the disparities in the condition of school facilities from one district to another. One group testified that disparities occur because wealthy school districts can afford to build beyond the level deemed adequate by the*

Partnership Program rules. These districts use local property wealth to provide better facilities when poorer districts have trouble raising the local share for the basic facilities funded by the Partnership Program.

- *Open-enrollment charter schools are not eligible for Partnership Program funds. Charter school advocates have argued that the state should establish a facilities funding assistance program to ensure these public schools are able to provide an adequate and equitable education.*

Pursuant to the motion of Senator Pierce, which was seconded by Representative Baltz, the Academic Facilities Oversight Committee voted to recommend that the House Interim Committee on Education and the Senate Interim Committee on Education review the feasibility of conducting a comprehensive review of the state's current academic facilities.

We hope you will find this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if you have any questions or if you need additional information.