



**Baltimore City Community College
Capital Budget FY 2017 Testimony
Senate Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 15, 2016
House Capital Budget Subcommittee
March 16, 2016**

Good afternoon, Chairman DeGrange and Members of the Capital Budget Subcommittee. I am Dr. Gordon May, President and CEO of Baltimore City Community College (BCCC). It is an honor and pleasure to be here representing BCCC, its faculty, staff and students. Today, I have with me Dr. Todd Yeary, Chair of our Board of Trustees, and Calvin Harris, Jr., Vice President of Business and Finance. Also, I would like to introduce our Interim Director of Legislative Affairs, Shanetta J. Paskel, who many of you know from her time working here in the past.

It is my first Capital Budget hearing and I am pleased to be here to update you on our capital projects.

As you are aware BCCC is the only community college in Baltimore City, and the only State-funded community college in Maryland. We have 29 credit associate degree programs and 16 certificate programs. Several of our programs are designed for students to transfer to a four-year institution and many are designed for immediate entry into a career. Additionally, through our Business and Continuing Education **Division** (BCED), we offer career training, English as a second language (ESL) courses, adult literacy, and GED preparation courses. Through our credit programs and BCED course offerings, students receive training, certification, and licensure for a multitude of in-demand positions and jobs. As we move forward, continued state support will be essential to delivering quality education at an affordable cost in a changing, increasingly competitive environment.

Please note that included in your folder is a brochure that highlights BCCC's programming, student activities, and recent events. I hope you take an opportunity to review it at your convenience. Now, we provide the following in response to the Capital budget questions.

Summary of Recommended Bond Actions Funds:

1. Liberty Campus Loop Road, Inner Loop and Entrance Improvements.

The President approves.

2. Baltimore City Community College – Main Building Renovation.

The President approves.

QUESTION #1 (page 2). The President should brief the committees concerning any conversations between BCCC and Baltimore City regarding potential ingress/egress traffic patterns and street changes and pedestrian safety improvements along Liberty Heights Avenue.

The President’s Response:

The College and the City have engaged in limited productive conversations; however, with significant transitions in College leadership on both the Board and management levels, we anticipate more frequent and productive communications in the coming year.

The College intends to continue these vital conversations, as traffic patterns, and ingress and egress on Liberty Heights Avenue are huge concerns for the College. For example, during the April 2015 events related to the death of Freddie Gray, many activities occurred within a half of a mile of the College. On one day during the height of activities, the College was forced to close and evacuate the campus. For many students and staff, even with a Baltimore City Police Officer providing traffic direction, a full evacuation took over three hours. Much of this delay was due to the layout of the College, which includes a single three-lane vehicular ingress and egress.

The College believes the expansion of this ingress, as noted in the Loop Road project, will greatly enhance the traffic safety environment. Also the College believes that the potential inclusion of a pedestrian bridge over Liberty Heights Avenue is the safest, long-term solution of pedestrian crossing of that road. However, the College will continue its communications with the City, to attempt to find short term adjustments to Liberty Heights Avenue itself that can improve safety along the primary road that borders the College.

QUESTION #2 (page 4). The President should comment on discussions with the Baltimore Jewish Council regarding the possible relocation of the Holocaust Memorial and potential costs.

The President’s Response

Discussions between BCCC and the Baltimore Jewish Council (“BJC”) are ongoing. In fact, the discussions regarding relocating the Holocaust Memorial have also included the Department of General Services (“DGS”), the City of Baltimore (“City”), the Baltimore Development Corporation (“BDC”),

and the Downtown Partnership. In March 2015, all of the above parties met to discuss the future of Bard, relocation of the Memorial, and Bard's redevelopment. However, a significant issue at the time was the General Assembly's requirement that a demolition study be completed by DGS before moving forward with Bard's redevelopment.

BCCC met with the Secretary of DGS in October 2015 to discuss completion of the Bard demolition study. BCCC specifically requested that the demolition study provide cost estimates for demolishing Bard, leaving historical aspects of the Memorial in place, and demolishing Bard and relocating the Memorial. DGS also agreed to facilitate discussions with BJC to discuss relocating the Memorial.

In December 2015, BCCC received the demolition cost estimate from DGS. The exact cost of relocating the Memorial, compared to having it remain in place, are contained in the demolition study. However, the cost differential between relocating the Memorial or keeping it intact is not significant. With the demolition study completed, BCCC also requested that the Downtown Partnership work with BJC on selecting potential sites where the Memorial could be relocated. In January, BCCC met with the Downtown Partnership to discuss what sites had been identified for relocation. BJC has identified one site that is of interest to it, and the Downtown Partnership is exploring the feasibility of that site.

QUESTION #3 (page 5). The President should comment on what funding the college may pursue to finally realize the demolition of the Bard Building and a reasonable timeline for using the Bard Building's site again for productive purposes.

The President's Response

As Mr. Halbach correctly states in his analysis, there are several funding options available for BCCC to pay for demolishing Bard. Given the funding options available for redevelopment, BCCC has no plans to sell the site. Rather, in keeping with statutory law, BCCC plans to redevelop the site to its maximum commercial value in a way that is consistent with the mission and vision of the College. BCCC's most reasonable funding option for redevelopment would be through a public-private partnership. While a public-private partnership is the best long term vehicle for redevelopment, BCCC wants the building demolished as soon as possible, due to its blight on the community, health and safety concerns, and the yearly cost of maintenance of approximately \$100,000 per year.

BCCC had the funds in its operating budget to demolish Bard for quite some time, but was restricted from doing so by the General Assembly. Now the restrictions have been removed, but BCCC no longer has the operating funds to demolish Bard because of successive reductions to its fund balance totaling \$7.3 million dollars over the last three fiscal years. Immediate restoration of the funds to BCCC's fund balance will allow BCCC to demolish Bard immediately, and issue an RFP for public-private partnership redevelopment in early FY 17. As an interim use between demolition and redevelopment, BCCC has discussed with the Downtown Partnership about creating green space on the site. Creating green space will eliminate blight and signal a change in the downtown Baltimore area. Green space will also allow potential developers to get a better appreciation of the site and what development opportunities are possible. Proceeding in this manner is BCCC's preferred method and is how the College would like to proceed.

Absent restoration of funds to BCCC's fund balance, BCCC will need to issue an RFP for public-private partnership redevelopment, and include the cost of demolition in the RFP. An RFP could be issued in early FY 17 as well. However, as noted in Mr. Halbach's analysis, an RFP for a combined demolition/redevelopment was previously attempted before being terminated in 2012. The initial RFP for redevelopment was issued in 2008, yet the property remains undeveloped. BCCC cannot afford to have the property caught in limbo again, so BCCC is requesting that funds be restored to its fund balance to demolish Bard, and then it will proceed to issue an RFP for public-private partnership redevelopment.

GO Bond Recommended Actions

1. Approve the \$0.2 million in general obligation bonds for the design of the loop road improvements on the Liberty Campus of Baltimore City Community College.
2. Approve the de-authorization of \$0.1 million in general obligation bonds for the construction of renovations to the Main Building on the Liberty Campus of Baltimore City Community College.

This concludes my testimony. I thank you for this opportunity and for your continuing support of BCCC and our students.