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**BUILDING TEACHER QUALITY IN BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
The City Must Overhaul Its Tenure Process, Do More to Support Struggling Teachers
and Increase Compensation If It Wants to Retain Effective Teachers**

*These and many other recommendations are made in a report by
the National Council on Teacher Quality and the ACLU-Maryland,
which teamed up to analyze Baltimore teacher policies*

Baltimore, MD—Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released a report on Baltimore City Public Schools policies that praises the district for hiring new teachers with strong academic backgrounds, but criticizes it for not doing all it can to hold onto them. Among the report's findings:

- When it comes to giving principals authority over the composition of their schools' faculties, Baltimore is among the most progressive districts in the country.
- Despite district rules requiring annual evaluations of all teachers, only half were evaluated in 2008-09.
- While Baltimore's salaries can't compete with pay in surrounding districts, across-the-board raises are not the solution. The district should develop targeted strategies for increasing talent, such as offering high salaries to its most effective teachers.

"Relative to other districts, Baltimore has made great strides attracting strong teacher candidates into the city and giving principals the authority to decide who teaches in their building," says Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. "But there remain two clear goals if Baltimore is going to achieve a high-quality teacher force: Improve teacher retention and overhaul the evaluation system, so that it can serve as the engine for improving teacher quality."

In partnership with the Education Reform Project of the ACLU-Maryland, NCTQ studied both city and state regulations, comparing them with those found in NCTQ's 101-district TR³ database (www.nctq.org/tr3). NCTQ also spoke with students, teachers, parents, administrators and union leaders, to see how policies play out in practice.

"Effective teachers in every classroom must be our number one goal," says Bebe Verdery, ACLU-MD Education Reform Project Director. "The NCTQ study gives Baltimore an important perspective as to how it compares with other cities and Maryland counties, and how better to get to that goal."

The 57-page report explores 10 policy goals, including those pertaining to hiring, assignments, support for new and struggling teachers, evaluations and dismissal of ineffective teachers. The report also addresses working conditions and compensation.

Among the findings:

- As in most American school districts, principals in Baltimore do not adequately perform a critical task: evaluating their teachers. All teachers in Baltimore are supposed to be evaluated annually, but only half are. And those evaluated are almost always guaranteed a good rating, with 98 percent rated “satisfactory” in 2008-09.
- Baltimore is ahead of most districts in allowing principals to fill their own vacancies, discarding the common practice of forced placements by the central office. But the district is also required, by state law, to keep a tenured teacher who’s lost a position on the payroll, even if she can’t find a position in another school.
- Baltimore has a hard time holding onto good teachers, with a three-year retention rate of 65 percent and barely half of teachers remaining in the same school. The district also hurts itself by not allowing non-tenured teachers to transfer from one school to another.
- To comply with a new state board regulation requiring that student growth account for at least 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation, the district will need to change its teacher-evaluation system, which does not sufficiently factor in student achievement.
- Baltimore teachers are given less planning time, but receive 30 percent more sick leave, on average, than their colleagues nationally.

NCTQ’s recommendations to improve teacher quality in Baltimore include:

- Change Maryland law so that teachers who are without a permanent school-based assignment for one year can be dismissed.
- Acknowledge that the way Baltimore has always tried to do mentoring isn’t particularly effective, and look to alternative models.
- Lengthen the work day to eight hours to provide teachers with more planning time.
- Reduce the number of sick-leave days from 15 to 10.
- Change the structure of raises so that teacher salaries are tied to school responsibilities and classroom effectiveness—not the years teachers have worked in Baltimore or the number of graduate credits they have accumulated.

To view the full report, including all of the findings and recommendations, please go to www.nctq.org/p/publications/docs/nctq_baltimore_teacher_quality.pdf.

The National Council on Teacher Quality is a non-profit organization comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans and Independents. The organization supports reforms in a broad range of teacher policies and seeks to lend transparency and accountability to the three institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: state governments, colleges of education and teachers unions.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland is a non-profit organization focused on defending and preserving the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in the United States. Its Education Reform Project works to ensure that children in Maryland public schools, particularly those at risk of failure, are accorded an education sufficient to meet educational standards and lead productive lives.

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