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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **Enrollment Rises: Baltimore City Public Schools Ends Four Decades of Decline**

(Baltimore, MD) — Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) student enrollment is up this year, breaking decisively with a four-decade trend of decline—and countering state projections that the decline would continue for six more years. Preliminary projections put pre-K-12 enrollment at a minimum of 81,978 as of Sept. 30, 2008, compared to 81,284 on Sept. 30, 2007. City Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso will announce this latest great City Schools news this morning at a celebratory brunch at Ravens Stadium to mark the overall improving health of the city’s public school system.

“This enrollment increase is a testament to the great hopes and hard work of many, many people and it shows what we can do for our great kids when educators and families come together. We are reaching, and helping prepare for the future, hundreds more kids—instead of losing thousands,” said City Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso. “The growth in student numbers suggests new academic options are working and parent confidence in City Schools is building. These numbers are a proxy for everything else we do in City Schools.”

The enrollment increase comes on the heels of 40 years of declines. Following the 1968 riots, student enrollment, like the city’s population, slid into decline. Except for a six-year period in which it was up 5 percent as part of a nationwide baby boom blip in the early 1990s, enrollment fell 58 percent from 193,082 in 1969 to 81,284 last year. This year’s increase of at least 1 percent over last year is an encouraging sign that the long-term trend of 3 percent and 4 percent year-to-year decreases since 1994, and over most of the last 40 years, is turning around. And it differs dramatically from the Maryland Department of Planning’s projection that City Schools enrollment would be down 3 percent this year, as part of a continued decline through 2013.

The reasons for the 2008-09 enrollment increase are several-fold. City Schools is retaining students in high school, where the most attrition occurs. It is offering students and families more and better options: this year alone it opened six Transformation Schools, small combined middle-high schools, and it will open another nine in 2009; it created 1,000 new alternative options seats; it added 320 slots for pre-K students; it continues to add charter schools every year; and Advanced Placement course offerings are expanding. City Schools teachers continue to work hard and increase their expectations of their students. Students are responding with historic progress and academic gains. City agencies and partners are supporting City Schools in unprecedented fashion. And City Schools parents and families are increasingly engaged in their school communities and holding City Schools accountable for their children’s success.

“To see an increase in systemwide enrollment on the heels of the largest increase in high school enrollment in 14 years and a year of across-the-board student performance gains is telling,” said Brian D. Morris, chair of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. “It confirms that the current direction of City Schools is right on. And it increases the pressure on us as a system to make good on our goal to create an entire system of great schools for our great kids.”

The enrollment increase is very much the result of combined efforts of local and state officials, who are also rallying behind City Schools.

“The increase in enrollment is yet more proof that Baltimore is a city on the rise,” said Mayor Sheila Dixon. “As our city is renewed, more parents trust our school system with their children's future. I know Dr. Alonso and his team have the right plan in place to justify that trust and continue the steady improvement of our schools.”

“This encouraging trend is the latest in a long line of indicators that Baltimore has turned a corner,” added Gov. Martin O’Malley. “During these times of economic uncertainty, the need to provide a world-class education to every student continues. As the nation’s third best public education system, Maryland families can continue to rely on the ongoing state and local partnerships that make announcements like this possible.”

“Baltimore City Public Schools has been working diligently to strengthen schools and restore community confidence,” said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick. “The enrollment increase is another sign that the effort is paying off.”