

REPORT RELEASE EVENT

Fixing the Foundation

UNEVEN ACCESS TO MODERN SCHOOLS AND A BLUEPRINT FOR A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Gardner Auditorium - Massachusetts State House

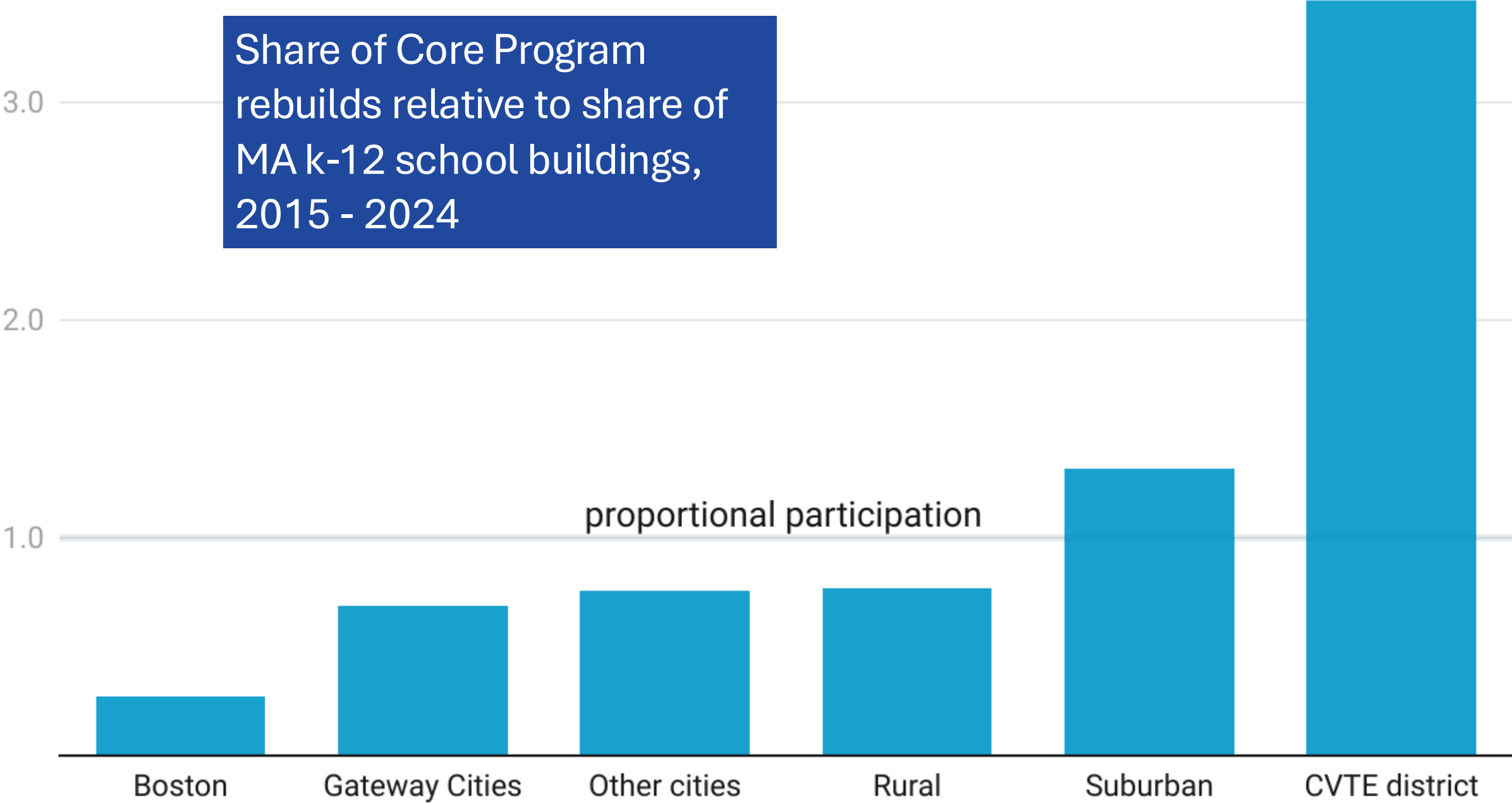
10 AM - 12 PM

MassINC
Policy Center

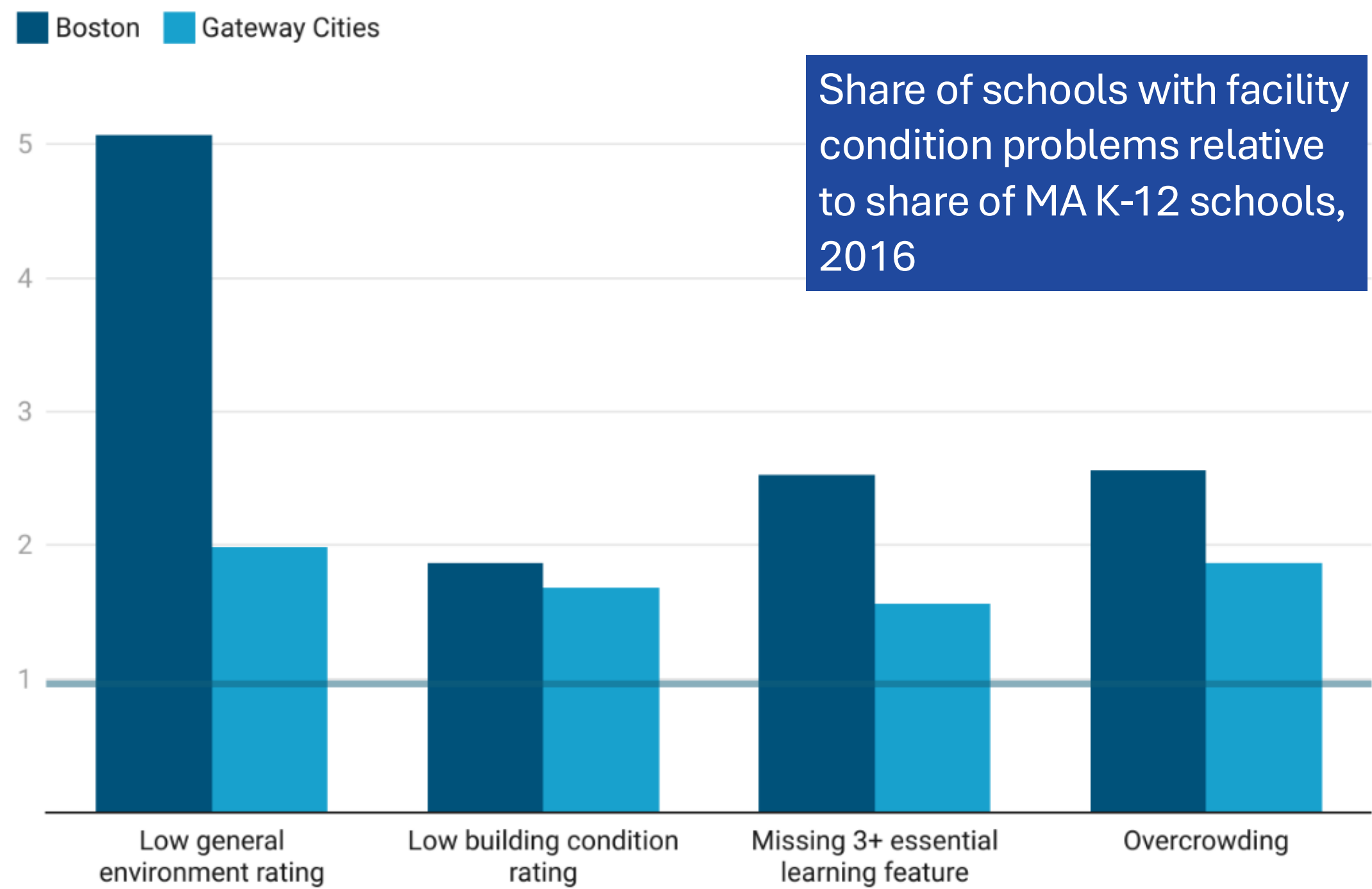


The Research Bureau

Suburban school districts have disproportionately benefited from the MSBA's Core Program.

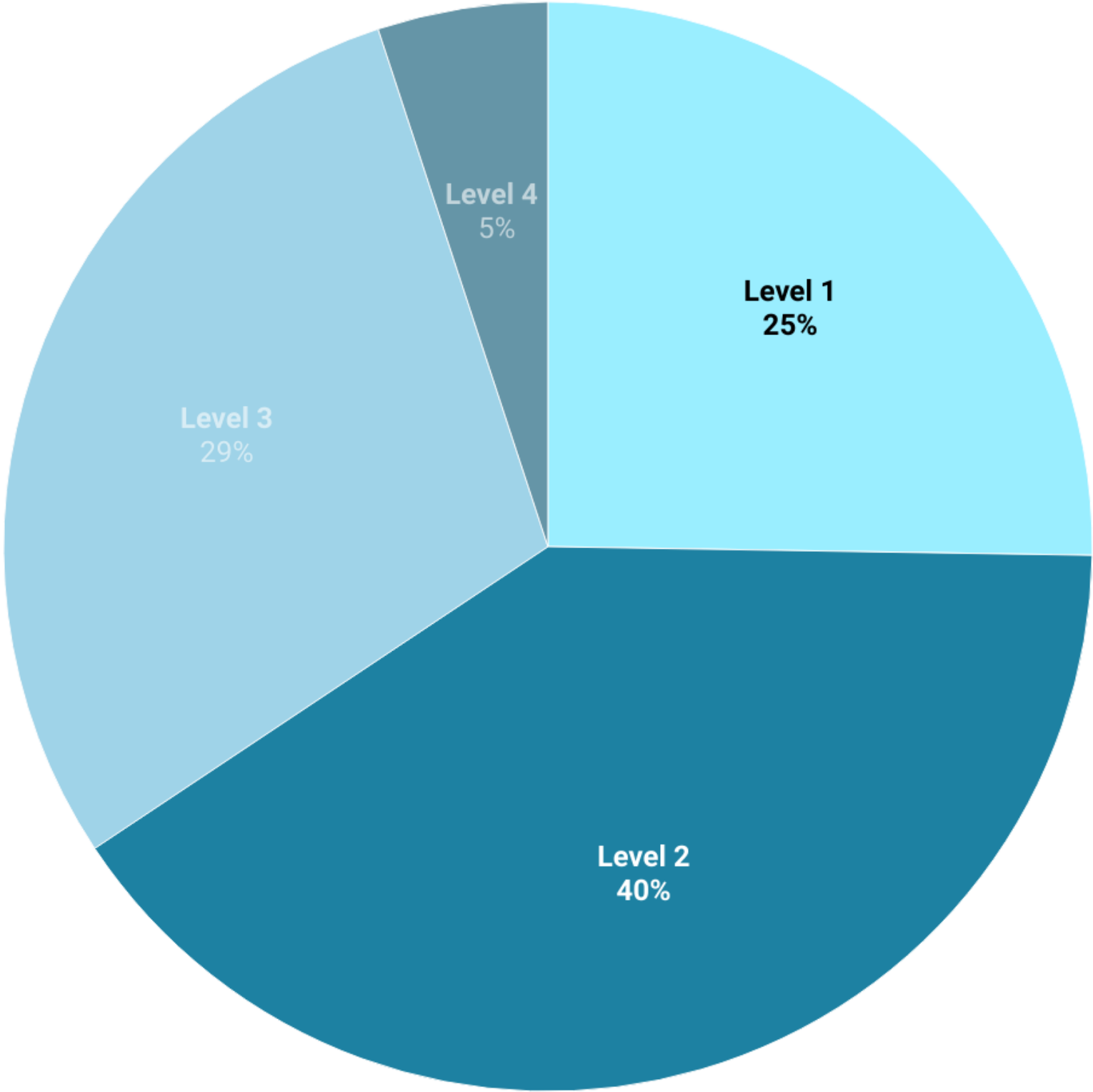


Urban districts have far greater needs as measured by both facility conditions and growth pressures.

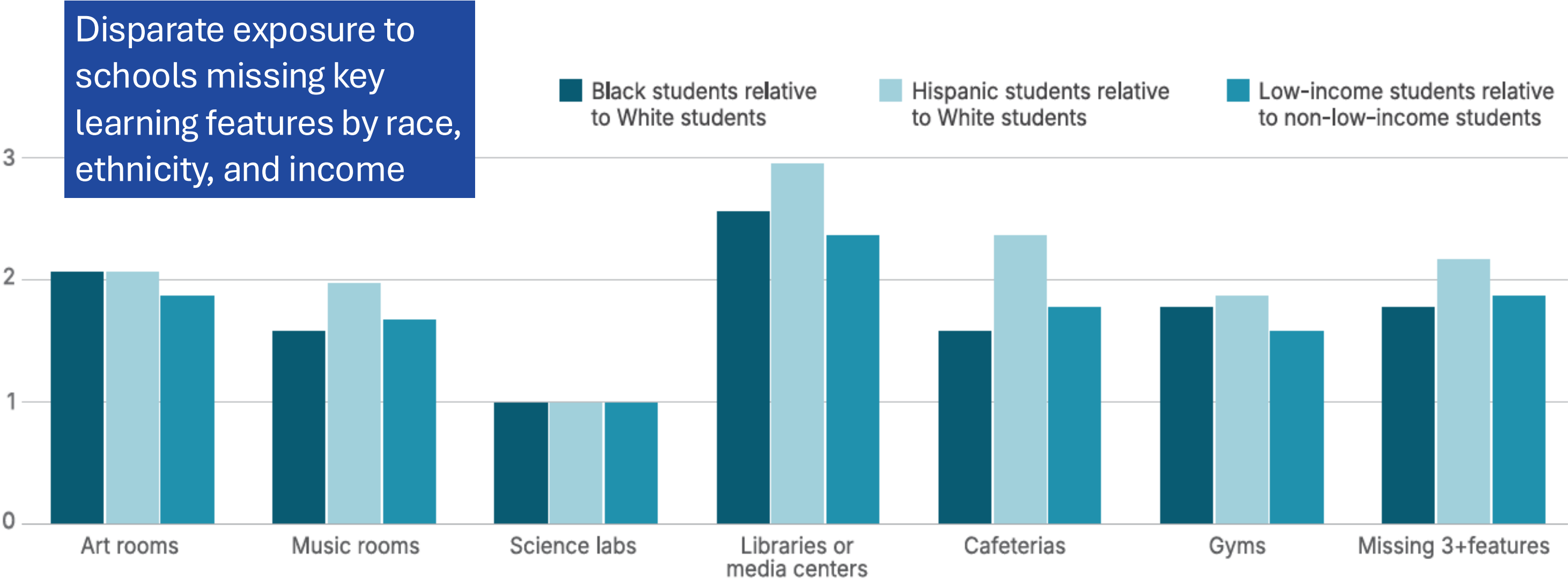


Since 2015, schools with the best physical condition ratings have received nearly two-thirds of Core Program invitations.

MSBA Core Program
Rebuilds by Building
Condition Rating,
2015 - 2024



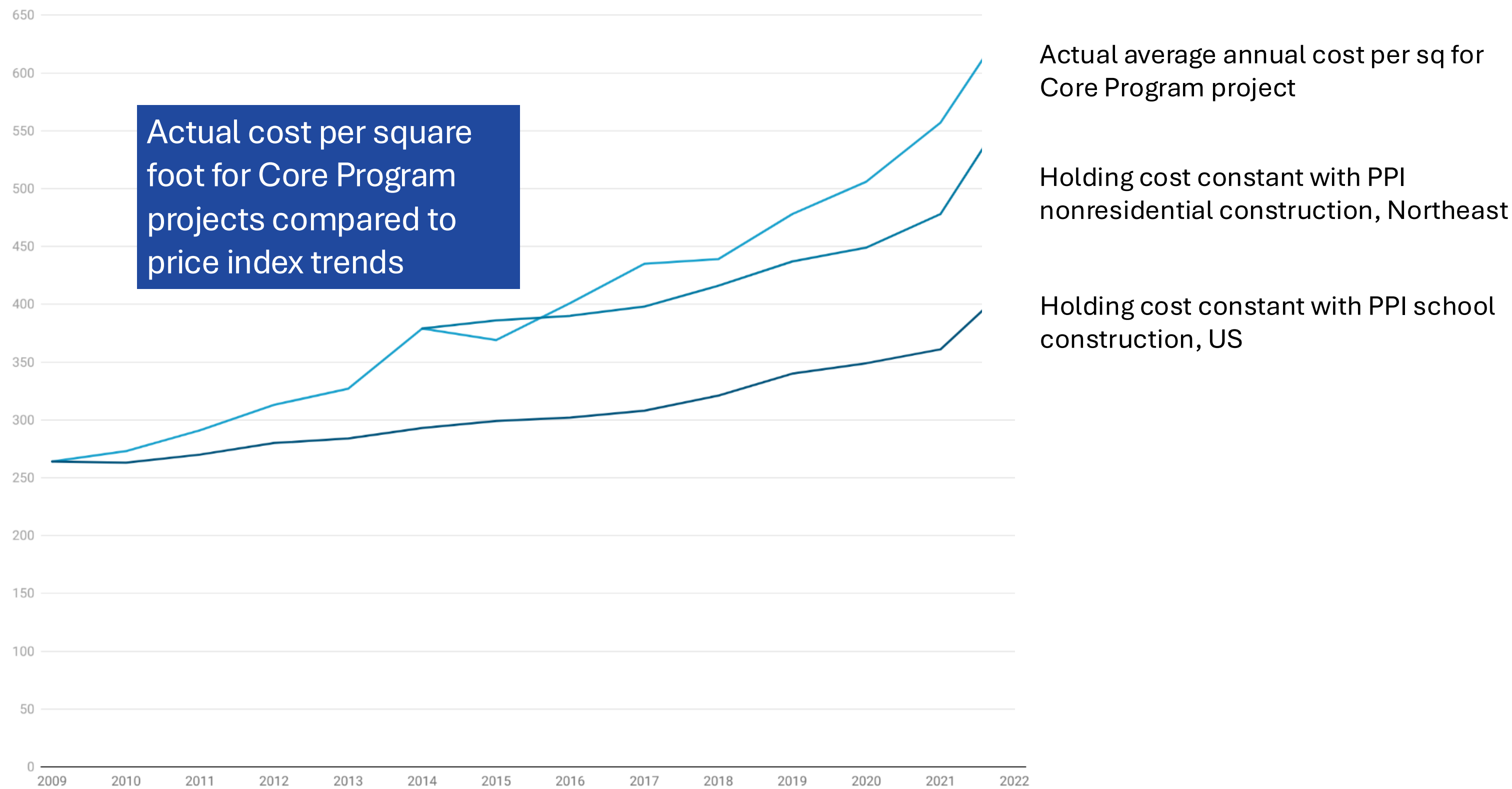
Black, Hispanic, and low-income students are more likely to attend schools with multiple deficiencies.



Note: Ratios based on 2024 enrollment patterns and the 2016 MSBA school facility conditions survey, excluding schools rebuilt, closed, or consolidated since 2016 and those with active Core program projects.

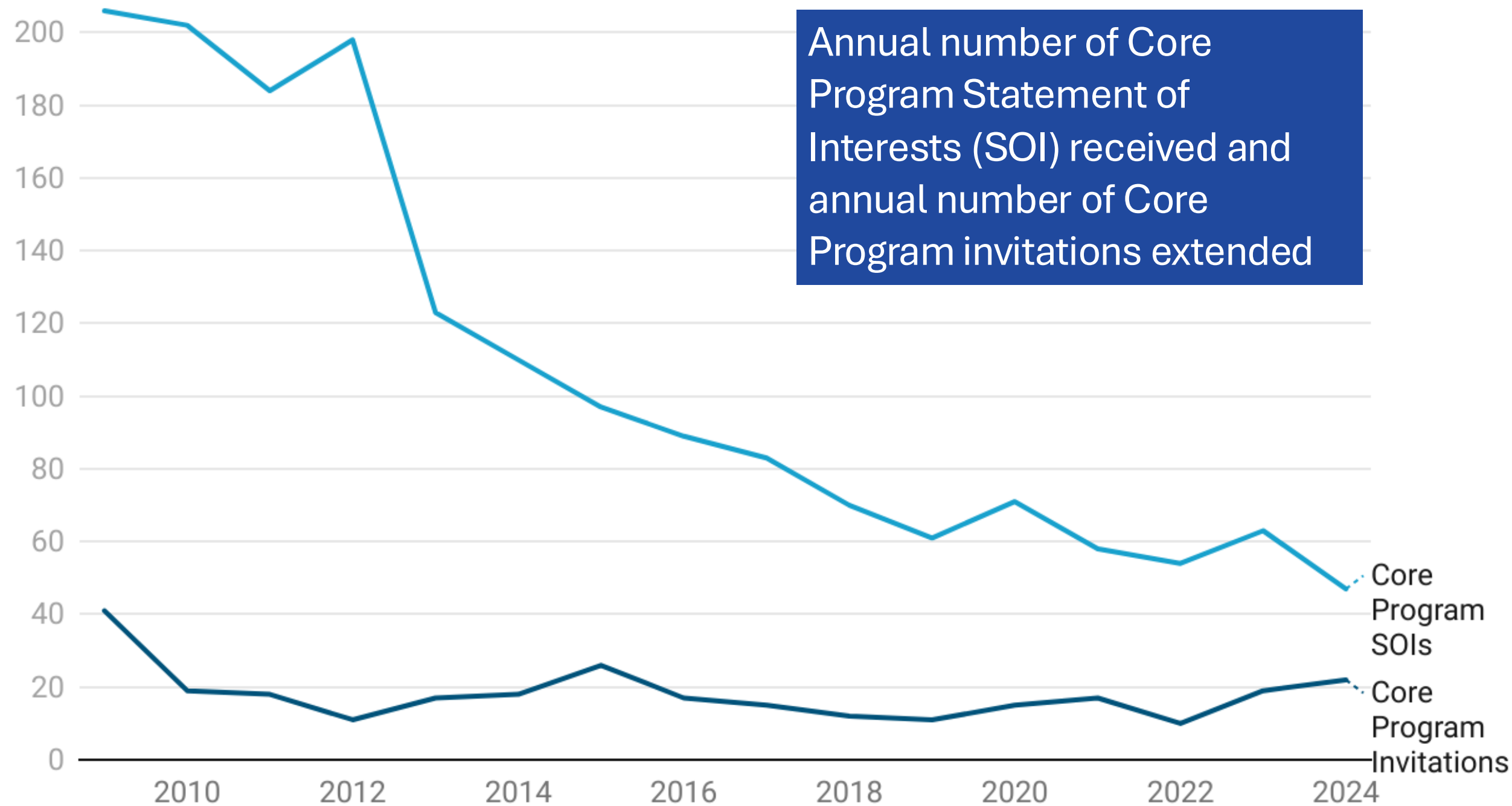
Source: Analysis of MSBA data and DESE enrollment data

The average cost of school buildings in Massachusetts has increased rapidly.



Note: The PPI for nonresidential construction in the Northeast was first issued in 2014. For that series, prices are pegged to 2014 MSBA cost levels.
Source: MSBA data and US Bureau of Labor Statistics • Created with Datawrapper

Cost pressures have reduced the number of communities seeking rebuilds and the annual number of projects awarded state funds.



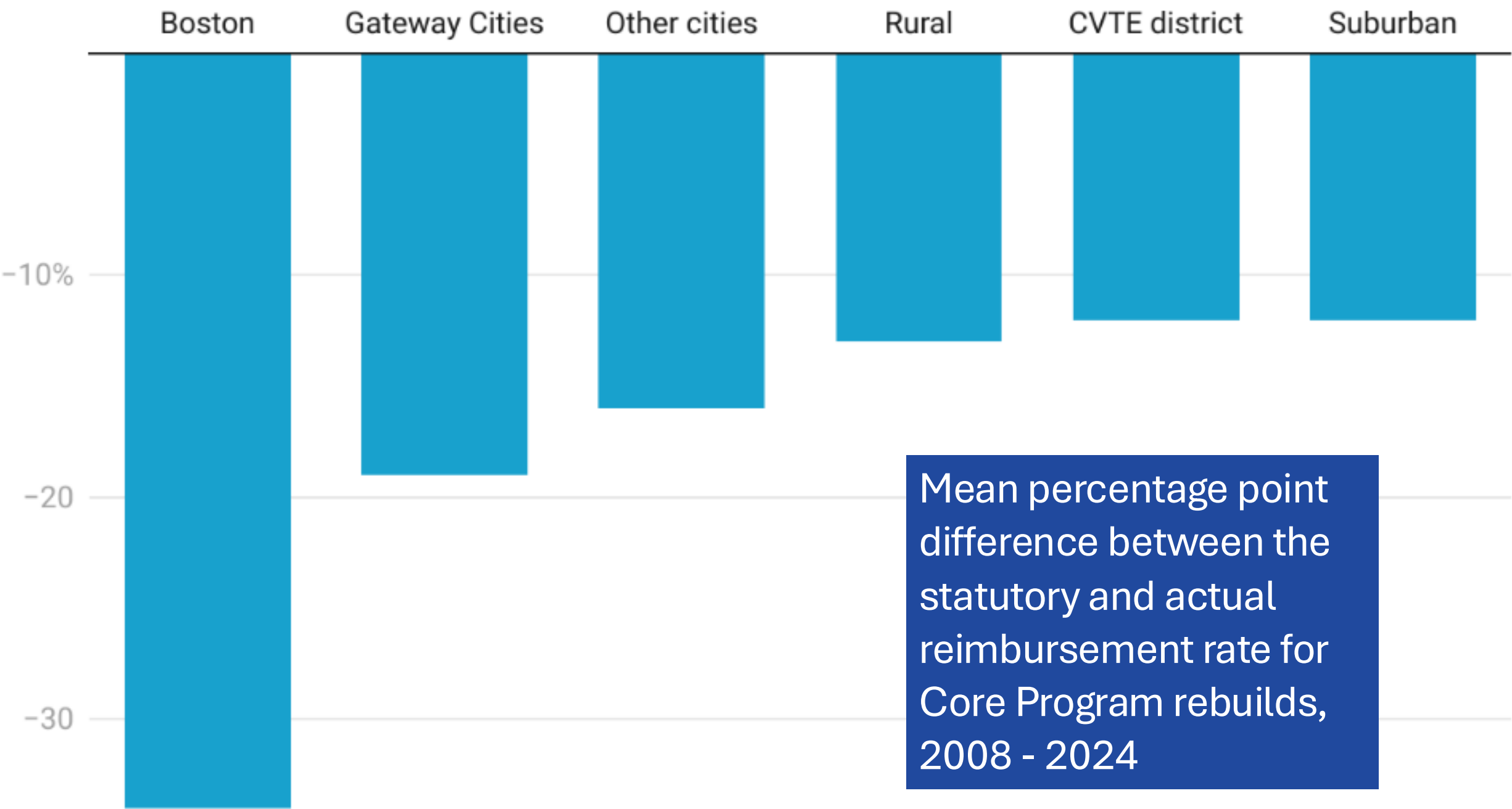
Source: MSBA data

MSBA Cost Control Policies

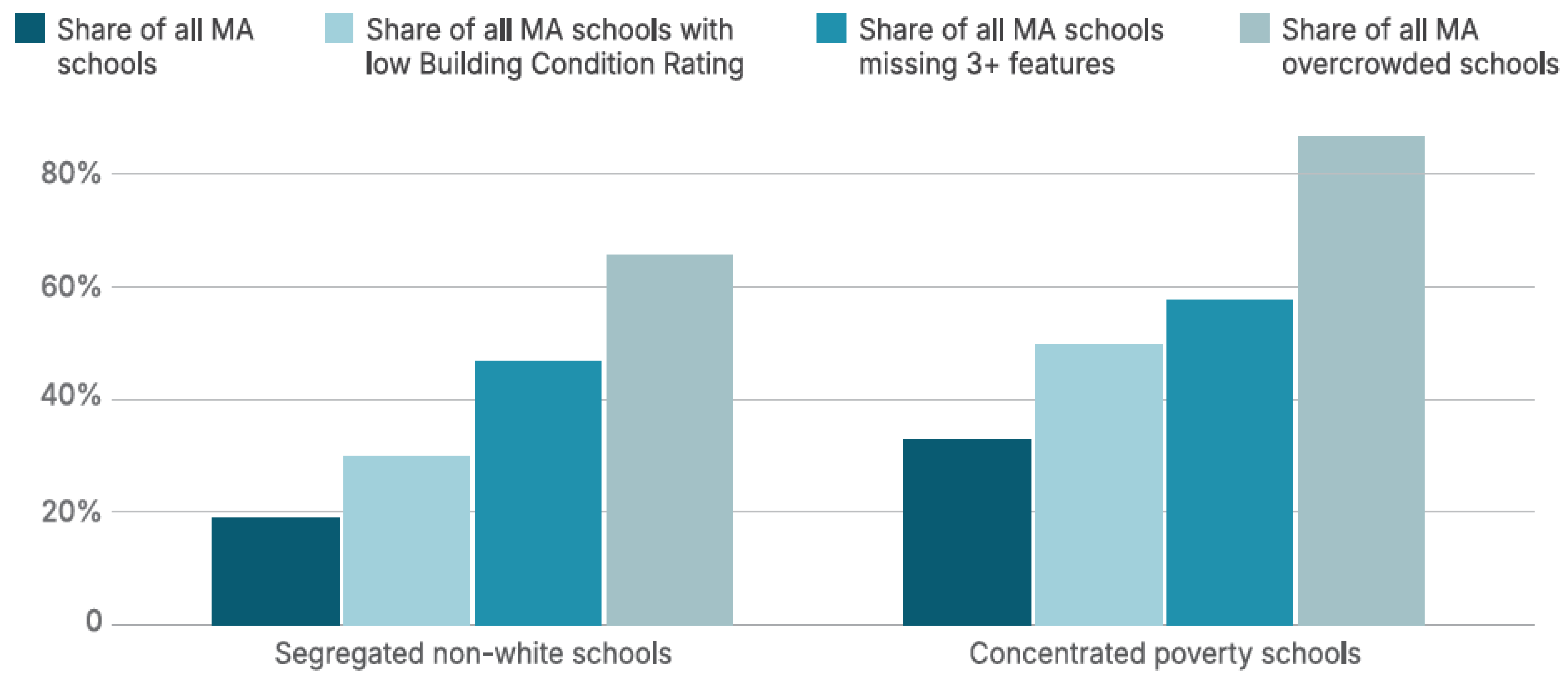
Cost Area	Status
Cap on reimbursement per gross square foot	Applies the same to all projects
Land acquisition	Ineligible
Site remediation	Ineligible
Demolition (lead and asbestos removal)	Partially ineligible
Temporary relocation ("swing space")	Ineligible
Auxiliary or shared community spaces	Ineligible

MGL, Chapter 70B, Section 9(b):
The authority shall issue annually maximum eligible cost standards and size standards for school projects. These standards may take into account the type and location of a proposed school project and may also take into account the difficulty of siting school facilities in dense urban areas in which there exists a shortage of available municipally-owned sites and the increased cost of construction and major renovation in such urban areas.

The MSBA's cost control policies fall more heavily on urban districts.



There is a strong nexus between racial and economic segregation and schools with facility condition problems.



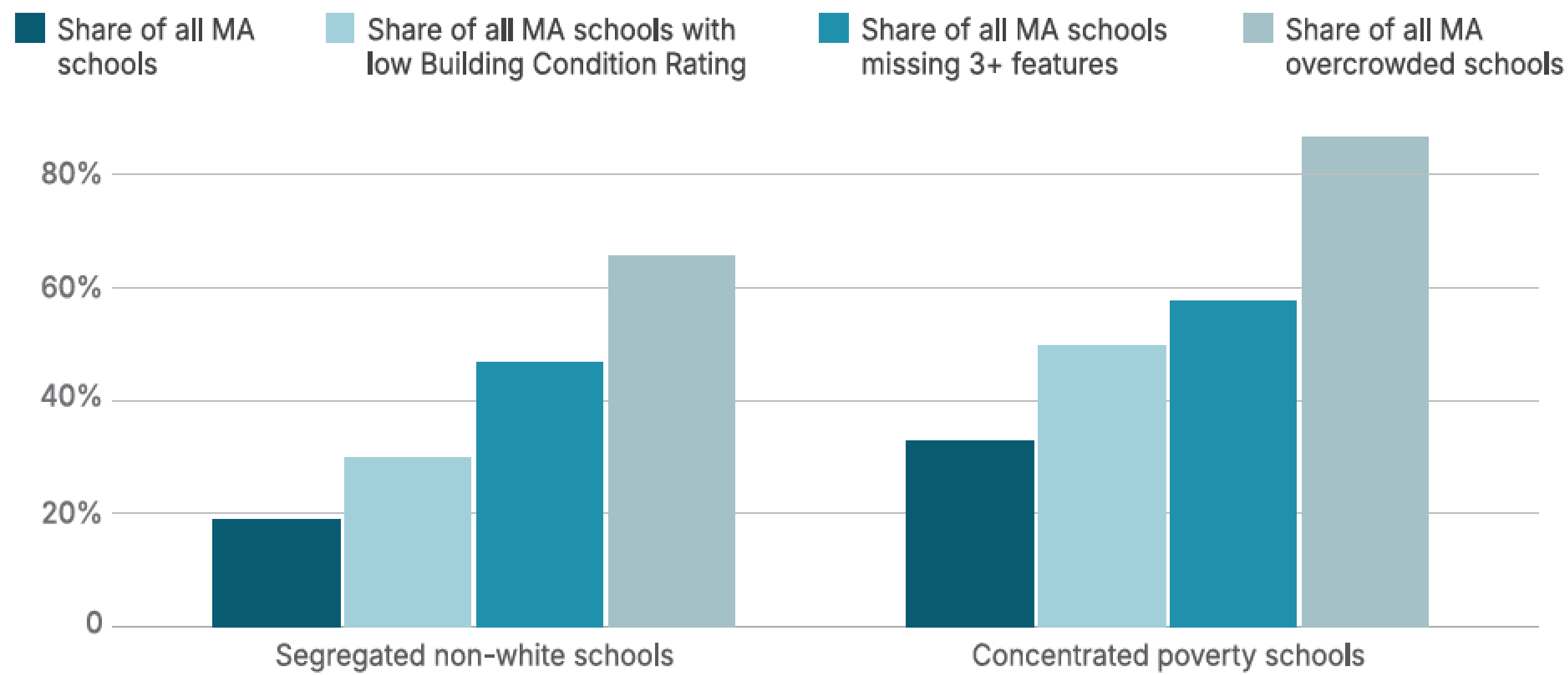
Source: Analysis of MSBA data and DESE enrollment data

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Case Studies



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Source: Analysis of MSBA data and DESE enrollment data









\$85 million Peck Middle School built with a 68 percent reimbursement rate







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Recommendations

- 1. Increase MSBA funding and prioritize inadequate buildings.**
- 2. Reexamine reimbursement policies to increase equity and more effectively support high-need districts.**
- 3. Ensure that the next facility conditions survey provides an objective and transparent benchmark for adequacy.**
- 4. Require municipalities to co-invest with the state when buildings are deemed educationally inadequate.**

- 5. Reimburse for the educational use of co-located facilities and offer incentive points to encourage agencies to bridge silos.**
- 6. Help urban districts build regional magnet schools that increase racial and economic integration.**
- 7. Provide greater support for feasibility studies, master plans and long-term stewardship.**