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**BILL:** House Bill 151  
**TITLE:** Capital Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2018)  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**Date:** March 7, 2017  
**COMMITTEE:** Appropriations Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all twenty-four local boards of education, supports House Bill 151, and the State's investment of more than \$330 million in elementary and secondary education school construction and renovation projects in the FY 2018 capital budget. Additionally, local school systems strongly support the Aging Schools Program as uniquely suited to funding small, but essential, projects not otherwise eligible for state funding in order to benefit our older public schools and the students and staff who attend them each day. This program was not funded in FY 2017, and MABE greatly appreciates the full funding for this program provided in the FY 2018 Capital Budget.

For MABE and Maryland's local school boards, the mission to provide all of Maryland's students with high performing school facilities conducive to learning is a top priority. The Maryland Constitution requires that the State provide a "thorough and efficient" system of public education, and MABE believes that this includes the duty to provide safe, high quality school facilities in which all students can learn.

Maryland's twenty-four local school systems are fiscally dependent on state, local, and limited federal funding for all operating and capital expenses. The need for increased attention to, and funding for, adequate school facilities has been the focus of the Task Force to Study Public School Facilities and subsequent legislation identifying the need for at least \$250 million annually in State investment in school facilities. Importantly, the Task Force focused not only on school construction issues, but also on the need for increased investment in the maintenance and repair of school facilities. Since FY 2006, the Governor and General Assembly have demonstrated a strong commitment by annually meeting or exceeding this goal. However, many costs remain unmet associated with maintenance and renovation or replacement of our oldest school buildings. Today it is widely recognized that \$350 million per year better reflects current needs and costs.

In 2016, the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate established the 21st Century School Facilities Commission to: review existing educational specifications; identify best practices and efficiencies from the construction industry; identify a long-term plan for jurisdictions with growing or declining enrollment; identify innovative financing mechanisms including public-private partnerships and alternatives to general obligation debt; and evaluate the appropriate role for state agencies in the school construction process.

MABE appreciates the State's investments in the annual capital budget and past investments of \$25 million for energy efficiency projects, \$25 million for school safety projects, and \$25 million for HVAC projects. In addition, the legislature enacted an initiative to provide more than \$1 billion in state and local funding for school facilities in the Baltimore City Public School System over a ten-year period. These initiatives demonstrate the State's commitment to investing in high quality school facilities for all students. In 2016, the 21st Century School Commission began to review the State's school construction policies and make recommendations for more efficient and effective school construction practices into the future. MABE is participating fully in this work, which is scheduled to continue through 2017, with legislative recommendations proposed in the 2018 legislative session.

For these reasons, MABE supports House Bill 151 and urges passage of the capital budget for school construction for FY 2018.