

**BILL:** Senate Bill 611  
**TITLE:** Education – Healthy School Facility Fund – Established  
**DATE:** February 27, 2018  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all twenty-four local boards of education, supports Senate Bill 611.

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. Therefore, MABE supports this bill’s proposal to create the Healthy School Facility Fund within the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC) to provide grants to public schools to improve the health of school facilities.

Maryland’s twenty-four local school systems are fiscally dependent on state, local, and limited federal funding for all operating and capital expenses. 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. On December 14, 2017 the Knott Commission adopted more than 30 recommendations, including several significant changes in state law and practice concerning school construction funding and procedures. The major funding recommendation is that the State’s short-term funding goal should be at least \$345 million; and increased to \$400 million after FY 2019. In addition, the Commission noted that the results of the facility needs assessment may result in a higher goal.

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 \$1 billion in state and local funding for new 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. MABE believes that the funding provided by Senate Bill 611 is much needed, and that this funding initiative for healthy school facilities is consistent with other targeted approaches which have proven successful in recent years.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 611.