

## SCHOOL FACILITIES FUNDING

### MABE POSITIONS

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** a state funding level of at least \$400 million for school construction and renovation projects for FY 2022 to provide the State's share of approved projects to build, renovate, and improve schools.
- ✓ **Supports** passage of the Built to Learn Act to launch a \$2 billion school construction program financed through the Maryland Stadium Authority.
- ✓ **Supports** additional State funding to support projects identified during the COVID-19 pandemic including HVAC upgrades and other health and safety related projects.
- ✓ **Supports** the pursuit of innovative construction and financing strategies to maximize the capacity of State and local bonding authority in support of high-quality school facility project funding.
- ✗ **Opposes** any legislation or school construction program action which would limit local authority over school facility design, construction, procurement, maintenance, or operations.

### BACKGROUND

For MABE and Maryland's 24 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 equitably provide safe, high quality school facilities in which all students can learn.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unforeseen challenges in the operation of school facilities including new staff-intensive standards for cleaning, new standards for indoor air quality requiring HVAC upgrades, and social distancing standards impacting facility capacity, and technology upgrades required for distance learning.

State and local governments share public school construction costs according to a formula based on a local jurisdiction's taxable wealth and other factors. The State's share of eligible project costs varies from 50% to 100%. However, because architectural, engineering, site development and other costs are ineligible for state funding, local jurisdictions actually pay a larger share of project costs than these percentages indicate.

The Knott Commission on 21st Century School Facilities created by the General Assembly in 2016 led to the passage of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Facilities Act of 2018, which addressed educational specifications; best practices from the construction industry; jurisdictions with growing or declining enrollment; innovative financing mechanisms including public-private partnerships; and the role for state agencies. MABE supported the Act because it reflected local school system priorities for increased funding and process reforms to enhance state and local efficiency and flexibility while ensuring quality and accountability. The Act also called for a major increase in the annual State capital budget and reformed the structure of the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) in governing the public school construction program and eliminated the project funding decision-making role of the Board of Public Works.

Local boards appreciate the State's investments in the annual capital budget and targeted investments to support school safety projects, HVAC projects, energy efficiency projects, and designated funding for school systems with significant enrollment growth. In addition, the State is fulfilling the commitment to fund 21<sup>st</sup> Century school facilities in the Baltimore City Public School System, including net-zero schools. These initiatives demonstrate the State's commitment to investing in high quality school facilities and learning environments for all students.

In this context, MABE supports the Built to Learn Act program within the Stadium Authority; the equitable initiative to address the critical needs of schools with the greatest relative deficiencies in school conditions; and also firmly believes that State funding should be significantly increased to support the prioritized construction, renovation, and systemic projects in each of the 24 school systems.

For additional information, see [MABE's Resolution on School Facility Funding](#).