

SCHOOL FACILITIES FUNDING FOR EQUITY & EXCELLENCE

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 2023 to provide the State's share of approved projects to build, renovate, and improve schools.
- ✓ **Supports** continued funding and implementation of the Built to Learn Act and its \$2 billion school construction program financed through the Maryland Stadium Authority.
- ✓ **Supports** continued funding of projects to improve the health and safety of school facilities.
- ✓ **Supports** the pursuit of innovative construction and financing strategies to maximize the capacity of state and local governments to fund high-quality school facility projects.
- ✗ **Opposes** any legislation or school construction program regulations or actions 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 led to the passage of the 21st Century School Facilities Act of 2018, which addressed educational specifications; best practices; enrollment; innovative financing mechanisms including public-private partnerships; and the role for state agencies. The Act also called for a statewide school facilities assessment and consideration of using this data to inform local and state funding priorities. 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. MABE recognizes the value of a facilities assessment but supports the recommendation of the Workgroup on the Assessment and Funding of School Facilities to defer using the assessment conducted in 2021 for funding purposes due to quality concerns.

Local boards appreciate the State's investments in the annual capital budget and targeted investments to support school safety projects, HVAC and lead remediation projects, energy efficiency projects, and designated funding for school systems with significant enrollment growth. In addition, the State is fulfilling the commitment to fund 21st 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 firmly believes that State funding should be increased to support locally prioritized construction, renovation, and systemic projects in each of the 24 school systems.

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