

BILL: House Bill 365
TITLE: Public School Construction - Fossil Fuel-Based Energy System Cost - Prohibition (Green School Construction Act of 2022)
DATE: February 8, 2022
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Appropriations Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 365, which would make fossil fuel-based heating and energy systems ineligible for state, but not local, funding.

MABE's top priorities for the 2022 legislative session relating to school facilities, include:

- ✓ Support for 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;
- ✓ Support for continued funding and implementation of the Built to Learn Act and its \$2 billion school construction program financed through the Maryland Stadium Authority; and
- ✓ Support for continued funding of projects to improve the health and safety of school facilities.

MABE opposes House Bill 365 based on a firm belief that the State's school construction funding system should be equitable in terms of access for all 24 local school systems to sufficient State funding to continuously maintain, improve, renovate, and construct high quality school facilities and learning environments for all students and staff. This bill would establish the precedent that certain types of systemic projects would not be eligible for State funding, but could be funded with local resources, in a manner that would impose an inequitable burden on less-wealthy jurisdictions which rely to a much greater extent on the State share of funding to finance school facilities projects.

MABE supports the equitable goal of ensuring that both the traditional Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the new Built to Learn Act program administered by the Maryland Stadium Authority are available to local school systems as robust funding sources for new school construction, major renovations, and the typically much smaller systemic projects. Systemic projects include repair or replacement of structures such as roofs, walls, floors, and ceilings; and plumbing and mechanical systems such as heating, ventilation, air conditioning, water supply, electrical, sprinklers and fire detection, and elevators.

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 has fulfilled 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.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 365.