

**BILL:** House Bill 458  
**TITLE:** Public School Construction - Grant Programs, Approvals, and Administration - Alterations  
**DATE:** February 14, 2023  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS  
**COMMITTEE:** Appropriations  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 458, with an amendment requested to strike the provision of the bill to sunset both the Aging Schools Program and the School Safety Grant Program.

MABE supports the major focus and intent of House Bill 458 to make the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) an independent unit of State government.

However, MABE opposes the proposed sunset of the School Safety Grant Program following FY 2026. The purpose of the program is to provide an annual amount of \$10 million in grants to local boards of education for school security improvements, including: (i) Secure and lockable classroom doors for each classroom in the school; (ii) An area of safe refuge in each classroom in the school; and (iii) Surveillance and other security technology for school monitoring purposes. MABE does not foresee the need for these types of school improvements abating by the end of the 2025-2026 school year, and requests the removal of the sunset provision regarding this program. In addition, one of the key benefits of the safety grants is that they are required to be supplemental to funding otherwise provided through the school construction program.

Similarly, MABE opposes the proposed sunset of the Aging Schools Program following FY 2026. This program, traditionally providing an annual amount of \$6.1 million in grants to local school systems for relatively small projects including: asbestos and lead paint abatement; upgrading fire protection systems; painting; plumbing; roofing; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; site redevelopment; and school technology. Importantly, state allocations for these modest but meaningful projects do not require matching funds from the local government. Again, MABE knows that local school systems, from the largest to the smallest, value the benefit of the Aging Schools Program and request the preservation of this effective and efficient program.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 458, with the amendment to strike Section 1 of the bill which proposes to sunset Education Article Sections 5-317 (School Safety Grant Program) and 5-324 (Aging Schools Program) to effectuate the repeal of these programs at the conclusion of FY 2026.