



## House Bill 1290

### *Education - Public School Construction - Funding and Administration*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Appropriations Committee

**WITH AMENDMENTS**

Date: March 1, 2022

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1290 **with AMENDMENTS**. This bill establishes a series of policies to guide future school construction and capital projects as Maryland moves into implementation of the landmark education legislation The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Built to Learn Act. The bill also addresses some major concerns of local governments about the funding and state/local share of said projects.

This bill represents the hard work of the Workgroup on the Assessment and Funding of School Facilities, on which counties were pleased to participate. The recommendations of that workgroup, which have become the foundation for the policy suggestions of HB 1290, reasonably balance the needs of local governments to build and maintain safe, long-lasting school facilities and manage fiscal responsibility.

Counties are particularly pleased with the bill's state add-on incentives regarding total cost of ownership, net zero projects, and aid to school projects with high concentrations of poverty. Counties are also enthusiastic about HB 1290's establishment and implementation of the Local Revolving Loan Fund, to allow low-debt capacity counties to forward fund state and local funding for capital school projects. Notably, Frederick County Executive and former MACo President Jan Gardner helped inform and guide the interim workgroup's recommendations for the loan program and ensured that its terms were favorable for the diverse fiscal needs and realities of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions.

To complement the intentions of the interim workgroup and this bill, MACo has identified several adjustments and technical fixes and has worked with the sponsor and workgroup staff to introduce the following substantive amendments:

- The interim Workgroup on the Assessment and Funding of School Facilities recommended a new workgroup be established to help guide the implementation of the facilities assessment program and its future use to prioritize school construction projects. HB 1290 as currently drafted does not set forth a new workgroup, as the interim group had intended. An amendment to add the requirement of a future workgroup to guide facilities assessment implementation and the decision-making of the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) would be appropriate.

- The top of page 10 as drafted states the Local Revolving Loan Fund is to forward fund the local share of a school construction project. This language should be clarified via an amendment to properly express the full intention of the loan fund to forward fund both state and local share of projects. Page 13 under the economic development article does note both the state and local share in new section 4. Counties believe this intent should be clear in both sections.

Counties were pleased to participate on the interim Workgroup on the Assessment and Funding of School Facilities. HB 1290 represents the hard work of that group to ensure equitable policies to guide school construction under The Blueprint for Maryland's Future and Built to Learn Act implementation. The amendments recommended above will further clarify and strengthen the bill to successfully guide Maryland's future school construction. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 1290 **with AMENDMENTS** and urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report.