



House Bill 427

Higher Education – Community College Facilities Renewal Grant Program – Alterations

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: February 6, 2024

From: Brianna January and Kristina Curley

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 427. This bill would appropriately update the Community College Construction Program and its State funding to allow all 16 of Maryland's community colleges to annually access critical funding for new construction and capital maintenance.

For years, community colleges have taken turns accessing the critical capital support of the Community College Facilities Renewal Grant (CCFRG) program and funds, with eight of the 16 applying for and receiving \$1 million grants one year and the other eight doing so the following year. This has created equity among the community colleges, but in doing so, critical capital projects go unfunded, delayed, and incomplete every year.

Under HB 427, the State would appropriately fund the CCFRG and allow every community college to pursue critical infrastructure and facilities projects annually without having to increase tuition and costs to do so.

This increased funding comes as community colleges need it more than ever to help Maryland communities rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic. Community colleges provide instruction in several critical workforce shortage areas such as allied health, construction trades, business, and several other critical shortage fields. Research continues to demonstrate Maryland is underproducing in the skills needed by employers in these categories.

By supporting the capital needs of our community colleges, HB 427 will help them expand these critical programs and serve a greater number of students and, in-turn, help produce more graduates and qualified professionals in these in-demand fields. Furthermore, Maryland's community colleges serve some of the state's most vulnerable student populations, including a large portion of the state's Pell Grant recipients.

Counties are proud to support community colleges and the students that they serve and welcome a deeper State partnership to prioritize these critical institutions as well. HB 427 is a strong step toward doing so, and for these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 427 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.