



April 4, 2016

The Honorable Larry J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

As you know, the General Assembly has finalized the budget and accordingly, its many provisions will become law for the coming fiscal year. The legislature's budget followed the general tenor and guidelines that you established in your Executive Budget, and passed with overwhelming bi-partisan support.

We write to urge you to provide full funding to the state budget components which contain important funding for county governments.

In particular, we ask you to affirmatively fund the portion of the budget that relies on use of funds initially marked for the State's reserve. One of the modifications the General Assembly made was to apply a portion of the state reserve funds to certain projects. Your discretion will now determine the fate of those projects, and we appeal to you for your consideration. Several of these funding items are major priorities for local governments across the state:

AGING SCHOOLS

One portion of this funding is provided for the aging schools program, a program which has typically been funded through general obligation bonds. This funding is widely seen as the most flexible and effective tool to target small-scale maintenance of our school buildings – a matter you have publicly made a high priority during Board of Public Works deliberations. *This additional support is much appreciated as counties seek to keep pace with school construction costs that have been skyrocketing.*

PUBLIC SAFETY RADIO SYSTEMS

Critical funding for public safety radio systems is also included in this portion of the

budget. Allegany and Garrett counties are in the process of joining the Maryland FiRST police radio system – a statewide backbone connecting state and county resources for police communications. This collaboration brings Maryland taxpayers a tremendous economy of scale, and counties have embraced this state/local partnership. The radio system already serves as the primary network for Kent, Caroline, Queen Anne’s, and Talbot counties, and its capacity for statewide interoperability improved the State’s response to major emergencies and events, from civil unrest in Baltimore City to emergency medical assistance at the Bay Bridge Run. *Full funding of the budget is key to continued progress of this public safety system.*

PENSION OBLIGATIONS

The State’s 2012 decision to shift hundreds of millions of dollars in teacher pension costs to counties has had severe local consequences. But among the multiple effects of this cost shift was a provision pinning local costs to an estimate, rather than the actual normal costs. As a result, this year, the local school board obligation will increase by approximately \$25 million. A one-time allocation of \$19 million in this year’s budget would fairly account for the increase in teacher pension costs attributable to variables outside of the control of local school boards, while still requiring school boards to bear responsibility for the portion attributable to salary growth. *County governments, who already provide over \$200 million toward teacher pensions, would appreciate this reasonable support of this additional expense.*

We hope we will be able to rely on your support for the key funding described above as part of a balanced fiscal plan for the year ahead.

Regards,



John F. Barr
President, MACo
Commissioner, Washington County

CC: Mr. David R. Brinkley, Secretary, Maryland Department of Budget & Management
Mr. Joseph Getty, Chief Legislative Officer, Maryland Office of the Governor
The Honorable Michael Busch, Speaker of the House, Maryland House of Delegates
The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, President, Maryland State Senate