



December 13, 2017

Mr. Martin G. Knott, Jr., Chair
21st Century School Facilities Commission
Department of Legislative Services
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Knott:

Over the past year, the 21st Century School Facilities Commission has delved into the State's school construction system, exploring gaps and needs, potential ways forward, and generally leaving no stone unturned.

We appreciate your attention to school construction as a key government service and driving budget issue. We also appreciate your openness to input, your outreach to local government workgroups, and your frank communication of ideas throughout the Commission's process. Most recently, your presentation at the Maryland Association of Counties Winter Conference last week was very helpful in bringing our full membership up to date on your Commission's possible recommendations.

As you near the end of the Commission's work, we offer you congratulations and thanks. We also wanted to offer input on a few of the topics the Commission has discussed, as several of the subjects raised for potential consensus recommendations align closely with MACo's advocacy on school construction.

MACo has consistently advocated for a robust level of state school construction funding and supports the review of state support based on current school funding costs, and the results of a statewide school facility assessment. A new long-term funding goal would maintain the state-local partnership on school funding and ensure safe, modern, and equitable learning environments for all of Maryland's students.

Overtime, the State's school construction funding model has evolved to only cover certain costs. The exclusion of furnishings, including classroom technology, and building architectural and engineering fees from eligibility for state funding shifts expenses away from the ratios defined by the Board of Public Works. MACo has highlighted how eligible cost restrictions create an imbalance in final project costs, especially as counties strive to provide modern and sophisticated learning tools, and to comply with contemporary energy efficiency and environmental building standards.

Alongside the dramatic rise in school construction costs, county governments seek the most effective use of funding, and a broad range of alternative financing options. While current law outlines several allowable alternatives to county ownership of facilities, incentives could improve county governments'

abilities to explore their use. Financing options created by a school construction authority that issues extended-term length bonds, or a revolving loan fund for forward funding construction projects are two areas of interest to our membership.

In addition, a flexible State review standard that ensures smaller districts have support in design and construction plan reviews, while relieving larger districts from duplicative review processes, seems to fit within MACo's interest in maximizing the State's limited school construction resources across Maryland. As in all changes that may affect counties differently, we seek a win-win for jurisdictions of all shapes and sizes.

Counties have suggested revisions and updates to regulations, such as creating an in-house statewide environmental building standard as an alternative to LEED certification. A no-cost Maryland-specific alternative could eliminate a separate certification fee and reduce processing time, while preserving the same high environmental building quality. Likewise, rescaling blanket school shelter requirements to align with local emergency management plans would ensure that schools are not outfitted with infrastructure superfluous to local and regional sheltering needs.

As you complete the work of the Commission, please feel free to reach out to us directly, or through the county representatives on the Commission, Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner and Prince George's County Council Member Mel Franklin.

Sincerely,



Jerry Walker
Acting President, MACo
Council Member, Anne Arundel County



Michael Sanderson
Executive Director, MACo

CC: Rachel Hise, Staff, 21st Century School Facilities Commission
Jan H. Gardner, Commissioner, 21st Century School Facilities Commission; County Executive, Frederick County
Mel Franklin, Commissioner, 21st Century School Facilities Commission, Council Member, Prince George's County Council