



November 13, 2019

Dr. Salmon and Workgroup Members  
State Superintendent of Schools  
Maryland Department of Education  
200 West Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Dr. Salmon and Workgroup Members:

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) respectfully requests the Workgroup on the Assessment and Funding of School Facilities consider the following sentiments before adopting final recommendations. MACo appreciates the hard work and effort put forth by the Workgroup and staff, but as no statewide school facilities assessment has yet been completed, there should be no report with final recommendations. Instead, the final work product should simply summarize the major areas of discussion.

MACo strongly supports maintaining local authority to establish school construction priorities and opposes the recommendation of departing from project-based funding to a formula-based approach when developing the CIP. In the formula approach, categories and weightings under-emphasize local priorities and challenges, such as design preferences, community space, environmental considerations, contractual obligations, and local funding availability. Furthermore, the IAC staff recommendation of piloting a standards-based funding program could reward LEAs that fail to address critical needs while reducing funding for LEAs taking excellent care of facilities. Without detailed provisions to offset these perverse incentives, such a proposal could frustrate the goals of our very successful program of school investments.

We urge the Workgroup to appropriately recognize the insufficiency of relocatable classrooms when assessing the space sufficiency of a given school. We sincerely appreciate the continuance of discussion on this issue and are hopeful that the Workgroup will recommend relocatable classrooms be weighted as Category 2, regardless of age. We also question the funding incentives for local school systems to build schools with reduced total costs of ownership over a 30-year period. This may discourage local school systems from securing funding to upgrade systemics in accordance with industry standards or local policies and building codes, since the objective would be to outlast the useful life of the building-system. The focus of all school facilities should be on the delivery of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education to students.

MACo agrees that the State's commitment to school construction funding needs to remain strong in order to best serve the modern needs of our schoolchildren, educators, and communities. We support the reference to increasing funding to at least \$400 million annually.

State funding needs to recognize modern cost factors as Maryland achieves new environmental and energy standards, satisfies heightened needs for technology, ensures student safety, fulfills community resource needs, and integrates evolving teaching methods. Superficial comparisons between buildings created for the needs of yesterday versus those built for tomorrow only undermine the importance of the effort to recognize modern educational requirements and expectations. County governments share responsibility for financing K-12 school construction with the State and we all need effective formulas and guidelines in order to promote smart and effective funding for modern schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Sanderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being the most prominent part.

Michael Sanderson  
Executive Director  
Maryland Association of Counties