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The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

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House Bill 001- Built To Learn Act

Appropriations Committee- January 23, 2020

Support with Amendments

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the Montgomery County Council of PTA's (MCCPTA) for the 2020 legislative session. MCCPTA represents over 40,000 members from over 200 school communities. MCCPTA strongly supports HB 1, the Built to Learn Act. This historic bill will add 2.2 billion dollars to the school construction fund, increase the EGRC fund and adds resources to the Healthy School Fund. Considering the billions of dollars of backlog of important construction projects in Maryland today, this funding is crucial to Maryland public school students.

Montgomery County alone has a backlog of 1.2 billion dollars in major projects. This backlog was caused by a perfect storm in the last decade, with student population growth of more than 23,000 students and aging infrastructure that includes 27 schools that haven't been renovated since the 1970's or earlier. Yearly MCPS CIP budgets averaging 290 million dollars over the past 5 years have not made any reduction in the need for relocatable classrooms. We simply cannot catch up with the demand under the current economic conditions in the county.

Unfortunately a stagnant county economy will reduce the amount Montgomery County can spend on the school 6 year CIP this cycle, which will cause project delays. There are so many construction projects that would be devastating to students if they are delayed. We have schools with mold due to failing HVAC, plumbing and roofs. There is a school on the renovation list that has floors that sweat, lacks a sprinkler system and has to regularly replace ceiling tiles due to uncontrolled moisture. There are schools with 10 or more relocatable classrooms. We have schools that should be on the renovation list, but we are building 2 new high schools in this budget cycle to keep up with the incredible demand for space. HB1 will give Montgomery County the badly needed infusion of construction funds that will help our students learn in a safe, healthy and welcoming environment.

The EGRC funds have helped us over last few years, and we appreciate that this bill continues to fund that program, at a higher rate. We do have a concern that the 2.2 Billion in new money will be allocated through the same IAC rules. Montgomery County is calculated in a way that will make it very hard to come up with the matching funds due to the fact that we are in the lowest percentage bracket for state contribution and the current MCPS program builds using different specifications. We suggest some flexibility in the way new funds are allocated so that our county can take full advantage of the bond allocation, with the understanding that MCPS also needs to build in a way that maximizes the matching funds.

We thank the legislature for prioritizing the historic Built to Learn Act.

Respectfully,

Laura Stewart
MCCPTA Vice President of Advocacy

