

THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 21, 2023

Chair: Delegate Benjamin Barnes

Vice-Chair: Delegate Mark Chang

Senate Bill 175: The Maryland School for the Blind Public School Construction Program Eligibility - SUPPORT

We appreciate your continued support for this legislation, ensuring that The Maryland School for the Blind (“MSB”) continues providing its students with the highest quality education and care by having appropriate and well-maintained facilities. This bill would allow MSB to complete its Campus Master Plan and to have the necessary resources to maintain Maryland’s investment in the campus.

In April 2012, the passage of House Bill 1391 authorized MSB to acquire school construction funding. That legislation was time-limited, sunseting in 2028.

Since then, MSB has executed approximately three-fourths of its Campus Master Plan. The new buildings are modern, energy efficient, and accessible for the students and staff. However, the Campus Master Plan is incomplete. Senate Bill 175 would allow MSB to remain eligible for the critical funding needed to complete the rest of its Campus Master Plan executed after 2028.

Equally important, this bill allows MSB to properly maintain its new buildings in the stewardship of Maryland’s significant capital investment in the school campus since the passage of House Bill 1391 in 2012.

Without this legislation, MSB would be ineligible for construction funding after 2028 and would not have the resources to complete the Campus Master Plan. Parts of the campus would not achieve current accessibility requirements, and MSB would not be able to realize Maryland’s vocational education programming standards.

As MSB’s new buildings depreciate, there will be ongoing maintenance needs that IAC funding supports, including roofs and mechanical systems such as plumbing, electrical, HVAC, ventilation, elevators, and boilers.

This bill would ensure that the State’s significant capital investment in MSB is safeguarded and that the buildings are maintained in a safe and functional condition for the students and staff.

Senate Bill 175 would allow MSB to continue construction after 2028. It will positively impact the local economy by employing local architecture firms, construction companies, sub-contractors, and supporting jobs, generating income for local businesses.

For these reasons, MSB urges your continued support for the passage of Senate Bill 175.

The Maryland School for the Blind, its board, staff, and students sincerely appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

W. Robert Hair

Superintendent-CEO