



THE CITY OF BRUNSWICK MARYLAND

1 WEST POTOMAC STREET · BRUNSWICK, MARYLAND 21716 · (301) 834-7500

March 5, 2024

Appropriations Committee
Maryland General Assembly

Subject: Support for the Frederick County School Construction Master Plan Workgroup HB1016

Dear Chair Barnes,

We are writing to express our strong support for HB1016 proposing establishment of a School Construction Master Plan Workgroup in Frederick County. The legislation is both urgent and crucial, as it will facilitate the collaboration and transparency necessary to effectively address the accumulated capital renewal projects and the demand for additional infrastructure to accommodate expansion, as detailed in the Frederick County Public Schools' (FCPS) Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) for Fiscal Year 2024.

The inclusion of all stakeholders in the School Construction Master Plan Work Group is the right approach at this time. By bringing together State Senators, State Delegates, the Frederick County Executive, Frederick County Council Members, and FCPS Board of Education members, we can ensure that a diverse array of perspectives and expertise is considered in the FCPS school construction planning process.

The collective insights and recommendations from this group will be invaluable in developing a strategic and comprehensive plan for school construction and renovation. Furthermore, this group will ensure a transparent and collaborative environment, with shared responsibility ensuring that all relevant state and county stakeholders can contribute to addressing the substantial infrastructure challenges facing FCPS.

FY2024 FCPS Comprehensive Maintenance Plan (CMP) Findings:

The current state of FCPS facilities is described as "dire" in the FY2024 FCPS Comprehensive Maintenance Plan (CMP). Moreover, according to the CMP, the existing funding policy is predicted to lead to a "looming calamity." The CMP reveals the reality of the capital renewal and maintenance backlog within the county, with a preventative maintenance backlog exceeding \$500 million and a capital renewal backlog of around \$825 million. In total, the staggering backlog amounts to \$1.325 billion, without even taking growth into consideration.

The National Council on School Facilities, an authoritative industry source, recommends specific facility management standards. According to these guidelines, FCPS needs a 200% increase in funding, or a substantial \$146 million per year, just to maintain the current school facilities. And this doesn't account for the funding required to manage the booming student enrollment.

In the past 30 years, FCPS has constructed 20 new schools and 24 additions to keep pace with the extraordinary growth. However, in the same period, there were only 11 Capital Renewal Projects, including 3 limited renovations and 8 school replacements. Moreover, FCPS currently houses approximately 139 portables and, alarmingly, over half of those portable classrooms



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have outlived their 15-year lifespan. Over time, FCPS's maintenance strategy has evolved, opting to neglect capital-maintenance to the maximum extent possible, to free up resources for capital-renewal. We believe this "Maintain to Failure" policy is unsustainable under the current funding allocations.

In addition, FCPS is severely underfunded to upgrade to current standards and technologies. FCPS maintains that they can make adjustments to accommodate students and staff in accordance with ADA, and maintain safety, but there are glaring issues. For example, Brunswick High School is riddled with ADA issues and problematic open riser staircases that are not fire rated and do not provide proper egress. This problem is compounded by the fact that a significant portion of the student and staff population is housed on the second floor at BHS. The CMP even warns that "[m]any older schools lack a comprehensive fire suppression system." The CMP concedes that the lack of such suppression systems "does increase the probability that a fire event could result in much greater damage," but maintains that - somehow - this deficiency "does not pose a marked hazard to current occupants."

The current state of BHS, and FCPS facilities more broadly, as described in the FY2024 CMP is nothing short of alarming. Our students, teachers, and staff are contending with outdated buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and infrastructure that fails to meet today's educational and safety standards. It is imperative that we act swiftly to ensure that our educational environments are conducive to learning and growth. The facilities our children learn in today will shape the citizens they become tomorrow. We must invest in their potential by providing them with the high-quality learning environments they deserve.

We urge you to support this bill and move forward with the creation of the School Construction Master Plan Work Group. This bill represents a positive step forward in addressing the dire situation facing FCPS students, teachers, administrators, and staff.

Sincerely,

Nathan Brown
Mayor
City of Brunswick, MD

Hope Bonanno
Chair
Brunswick Schools Advocacy Committee