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**Testimony SB 1442 – Workgroup to study the Fiscal and Operational Viability of Public-Private Partnerships for Howard County Public Schools – Established Ho. Co. 14-24 Appropriations Committee**

**March 12, 2024**

**Informational**

Thank you, Chairman Barnes and Vice-Chair Chang and members of the Appropriations Committee, for the opportunity for AFSCME Council 3 to submit informal testimony on HB 1442, legislation to create a workgroup to study the fiscal and operational viability of Public-Private Partnerships for Howard County Public Schools.

While we understand that the legislation being introduced by Howard County is a workgroup and it does not bind Howard County into pursuing Public-private partnerships (PPPs), if the county is going to study this issue we feel it should consider a few key components: The public should retain control over decisions regarding transportation planning and management, the public must receive a fair value so future revenues won't be sold off at a discount, no deal should last longer than 30 years because of uncertainty over future conditions, and contracts should require state-of-the-art maintenance and safety standards instead of statewide minimum. These steps will ensure taxpayer transparency and make it clear that under no circumstances should a PPPs also include the continued operation and maintenance of the facility.

We also believe that Public-private partnership agreements should also include Labor Peace Agreements (PLAs). PLAs ensure the timely completion of projects at or under budget, provide employers with reliable sources of highly skilled workers increase diversity and support workforce development, and improve worker health and safety on the job. PLAs sometimes include provisions for training and apprenticeships that increase career opportunities for low-income communities. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have gained popularity as a means of financing and managing infrastructure projects. However, when it comes to K-12 school constructions, the adoption of this model raises significant concerns. Before we move forward further with these types of collaborations we should if this is the route to address school infrastructure needs in Maryland.

