

01.16.24 SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0110 - House Bill

Uploaded by: Albert Nickerson

Position: FAV



The County Commissioners of Kent County

Ronald H. Fithian, President | Albert H. Nickerson, Member | John F. Price, Member
Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator | Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.
423 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT Senate Bill 0110 / House Bill 0365 – School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations

Dear Senator Hershey:

Dear Delegates Jacobs, Arentz, and Ghrist:

On behalf of the County Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland, this letter serves as support for Senate Bill 0110 / House Bill 0365 - School Construction - Local Cost-Share - Alterations. Kent County Government's ability to fund its share of the Kent County Middle School modernization project will critically depend on increased State funding participation. Therefore, our support for the project is conditional upon the level of State funding participation achieved.

Kent County fully supports SB0110 and HB0365 as drafted.

Very truly yours,

Shelley L. Heller
County Administrator

SLH: tlt

cc: The County Commissioners of Kent County
The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist
Dr. Karen M. Couch, Superintendent, Kent County Public Schools

SB0110:HB0365 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Daniel Divilio

Position: FAV



Kent County Board of Education

Growing a Community of Leaders

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
The Honorable Jim Rosapepe
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB0110 School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing you today in full support of Senate Bill 0110: School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations. Passage of this bill before you is an absolute imperative for Kent County Public Schools, our students and staff and our community.

This bill ensures the process launched in 2018 to renovate and modernize our school buildings culminates with the capstone project in the Kent County Public Schools Six-Year Facilities Strategic Plan: the construction of a new Kent County Middle School.

Students in Kent County are served by a single middle school, Kent County Middle School, located in the heart of our county seat of Chestertown. The current structure is more than 70 years old and has both serious structural and educational deficiencies.

Kent County Public Schools has sought to address the twin challenges of our aging schools and shrinking enrollment by streamlining our operations. It was not that long ago that we closed two elementary schools. Before that, we went from three middle schools to one.

Unfortunately, as shown in our Six-Year Facilities Strategic Plan, our current middle school building can no longer be maintained through general upkeep. Nor do the myriad additions and reconfigurations of classrooms effectively serve today's students.

The current 50/50 cost-share plan for school construction between the state and our county creates a financial burden that our Kent County community — with a total population of less than 20,000 people, a median household income about \$27,000 below the state average and all five schools serving areas federally designated as low income — cannot shoulder.

A new Kent County Middle School will ensure all children in our community get the education they need during those very crucial middle school years — the years that see them truly begin to set a path toward their career ambitions.

As a parent of elementary-age children, I have a personal family investment in moving this bill forward in this General Assembly session and keeping the planning process on track for our middle school. My children could be members of the first classes to attend a new, state-of-the-art Kent County Middle School.

For all the children of the Kent County community, please send SB0110 forward with a favorable recommendation and urge your colleagues in the full Senate to pass this vital piece of legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Divilio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Divilio
Public Relations and Communications Specialist
Kent County Public Schools

cc: The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.
The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist
The Kent County Board of Education

SB110 Testimony - David Lever 01-18-2024.pdf

Uploaded by: David Lever

Position: FAV

KENT COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Senate Bill 110 - School Construction – Local Cost–Share – Alterations

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

David Lever, AIA D.Arch; Principal, Educational Facilities Planning LLC

January 18, 2024

I wish to testify in support of Senate Bill 110, School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations. Since 2017, I have assisted the Board of Education of Kent County with a range of facility planning matters. Based on a Facilities Master Plan approved by the Board in early 2018, the school system has carried out much-needed facility improvements, including security vestibules at every school, roof and HVAC replacements, and targeted renovations at two elementary schools. With these actions, the Board and Superintendent have demonstrated that they are responsible stewards of State and local funds, accomplishing projects within budget and at a high level of quality.

The instructional buildings of Kent County are now better positioned to support contemporary learning approaches, with the notable exception of the Kent County Middle School facility. On October 9, 2023, the Board of Education approved replacement of this facility on the existing site in Chestertown. The Board of County Commissioners supports the project, and the Interagency Commission on School Construction has approved design funds through the Built to Learn Act.

By increasing the level of State funding for the Kent County Middle School project by approximately \$17 million, Senate Bill 110 is the crucial piece that will allow this project to proceed through design and construction. The current facility presents many barriers to effective education, for example:

- **Deficiency of instructional and support spaces.** These include a complete absence of full, purpose-designed science laboratories, numerous classrooms without acoustic isolation, a lack of small spaces for pull-out instruction for students with special needs, the absence of teacher planning spaces, and an art room without natural daylighting. At a time when a great deal of emphasis is placed on STEM and STEAM instruction and on equitable instruction for students with special needs, these deficiencies translate to significant inequities for the students of Kent County.
- **Circulation.** During class changes students must pass through the Library Media Center, music students pass through the Gymnasium, and maintaining separation of the age groups during lunch periods requires a convoluted and time-consuming sequence of movements.
- **Accessibility.** The building does not meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. It has no accessible toilet for either students or staff, has no elevator to the 2nd floor, and the front entrance is not ADA accessible. It has a single accessible route from parking to the ground floor. These deficiencies present serious barriers to students, staff members and visitors with disabilities.
- **Building performance.** Originally constructed in 1950 and only fully renovated once in 1976, the building is not energy efficient and most of the building systems are old and in need of replacement. The maintenance of these aged systems is a drain on the school system budget, diverting much-needed operational funds from the classroom.

This is a critical project. Since Kent County Middle School is the only middle school in the county, the deficiencies of the building affect the education of every public school student during their formative early adolescent years, when their attachments to achievement, education and the community are being shaped. An issue of equity is involved: without the increase of funding of approximately \$17 million that SB 110 will make possible, this project cannot proceed, and middle school students in Kent County will remain at a significant disadvantage relative to their peers in other Maryland school systems.

For these reasons, I urge the members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to give a favorable report on Senate Bill 110 - School Construction – Local Cost–Share – Alterations.

SB 110- Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Dr. Karen Couch

Position: FAV



Kent County Board of Education

Growing a Community of Leaders

Dr. Karen M. Couch
Office of the Superintendent

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Jim Rosapepe
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT

BILL: SB 110

TITLE: School Construction – Local Cost–Share – Alterations

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation/ Education, Energy and Environment

CONTACT: Dr. Karen M. Couch, Kent County Public Schools Superintendent

Dear Chairs Guzzone and Rosapepe,

The Kent County Public Schools (KCPS) supports Senate Bill 110, School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations.

The replacement of Kent County Middle School was approved by the Board of Education on October 9, 2023. KCPS has applied for Planning Approval and design funds in the FY 2025 Capital Improvement Program and the Interagency Commission on School Construction approved design funds through the Built to Learn Act. Senate Bill 110 increases the level of State funding participation for this project and will provide KCPS with a crucial piece to proceed through design and construction.

This construction of a new middle school in KCPS is an urgent project, as the existing facility does not support a contemporary middle school instructional program and the building also presents a host of performance deficiencies. As the only middle school facility in the county, KCPS bears a large responsibility to provide essential educational as well as support services to the children of Kent County in their crucial early adolescent years. The existing facility impedes the delivery of the educational program in many ways, as the recently submitted Feasibility Study amply demonstrates. An issue of equity is involved: without the modernized

facility, the middle school students of Kent County will remain at a permanent disadvantage relative to the opportunities that their peers enjoy in other parts of Maryland.

Consequently, the Board of Education is seeking to increase the State funding participation in the project through a number of means: the percentage add-ons that are enabled through COMAR 14.39.02.05, an adjustment to the gross area baseline and/or the baseline gross square footage through an analysis of the space usage that is currently in progress (COMAR 14.39.02.06), and most important, a legislative action to increase the State funding percentage. The model for this action is found at 5-303 in the Built to Learn Act legislation, which was narrowly drawn to increase the State funding percentage in order to allow one jurisdiction to undertake necessary projects, a number of which are now well underway. This legislation will similarly allow the Board and the County Commissioners to proceed with a project that is of essential importance.

For these reasons, I urge the members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to give a favorable report on Senate Bill 100- School Construction- Local Cost-Share-Alterations.

cc: The Kent County Board of Education
The Honorable Stephanie Smith
The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist
The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz
The County Commissioners of Kent County

01.16.24 SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0110 - House Bill

Uploaded by: John Price

Position: FAV



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Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator | Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney

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The Honorable Steven J. Arentz
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist
Dr. Karen M. Couch, Superintendent, Kent County Public Schools

ABC_FAV_SB0110.pdf

Uploaded by: Martin Kraska

Position: FAV



The Voice of Merit Construction

January 18th, 2024

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To: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
From: Associated Builders & Builders Contractors
RE: SB 110 - School Construction - Local Cost-Share - Alterations
Position: Favorable

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) represent more than 1500 construction and construction-related companies through its four Maryland chapters. Our members believe in the tenants of free enterprise, investing in their workforce and giving back to the communities in which they live, work and play.

Senate Bill 110 creates a new adjustment to the local and State cost share of school construction projects that meet specified criteria. To be eligible for the adjustment (1) the percentage of students in the county eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FRPM) must be greater than the statewide average; (2) all schools in the county must participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP); (3) the State and local cost share must be 50% State and 50% local; and (4) the eligible project must be a school that is the only elementary, middle, or high school in the county. Counties with eligible projects must have the local cost share for that project reduced to equal the average cost share of counties in which all schools participate in CEP.

ABC supports public policy that will invest in educational infrastructure critical to Maryland communities. The Local Cost-Share model equitably shares the financial responsibility between local and state entities and ensures the development of high-quality educational facilities – especially in rural counties. This legislation will not only benefit the construction industry but will also significantly contribute to the well-being and future educational success of our communities.

ABC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Seante Bill 110.

01.16.24 SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0110 - House Bill

Uploaded by: Ronald Fithian

Position: FAV



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