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Chief Executive Officer


**Dr. Goldson Testimony
House Bill 1 – Built to Learn Act
House Appropriations Committee
Thursday, January 23, 2020**

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Vice-Chair Jackson and members of the Committee. I am Dr. Monica Goldson, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Prince George’s County Public Schools, and I am here to testify in support of House Bill 1. I would like to thank the Chair and Delegate Jackson for co-sponsoring this bill and I also want to acknowledge and thank our Delegates Barnes, Valentino-Smith and Proctor for their continued support of PGCPS, as well.

Last year, I appeared before this Committee and your counterparts in the Senate describing the substantial costs that PGCPS has faced addressing the dual challenges of a growing student enrollment and rapidly aging 206 school buildings. I cited the \$8.5 billion identified over 20 years to fully modernize building systems and components, repair or replace our existing schools, or expand existing capacities.

I explained our efforts to consider innovative financing mechanisms, other alternatives to traditional financing, as well as efficiencies and cost-saving options in school construction and maintenance. I also asked for your support in passing legislation that would authorize and partially fund alternatively financed public school construction projects in Prince George's County.

Since last year, our district has made significant strides and the need for addressing our adding infrastructure has increased exponentially. Our district grew by over 4,000 students in one year, the largest single year increase in over 15 years. This hyper-growth is expected to continue with our County's strong economy and diverse population centers. Additionally, working in conjunction with our Board of Education, we have approved the first package of six middle schools and have issued a Request for Proposal utilizing the public-private partnership model referenced earlier. We expect these schools to be ready for occupancy in August 2023.

Thanks to your support last year, PGCPS has started the process of developing a public-private partnership to accelerate the renovation, maintenance or construction of new schools in a shorter timeframe and at a lower cost than the traditional process allows. With the support of County Executive Alsobrooks and the County Council, Prince George's County government and PGCPS will invest \$25-30 million a year for the next 30 years in school construction funds, our largest infrastructure investment in generations. Over the next 10 years, over 30 schools in the district will undergo renovations to improve conditions and make our facilities  places for learning and the communities they serve.

We are excited about this next step, but our district is the second largest in Maryland and our needs are great. That is why I am here to testify in support of House Bill 1, which would provide PGCPS with roughly \$750 million for a future Public-Private Partnership. This new resource would allow PGCPS to dramatically jumpstart our construction program and focus on improving the learning environments for our nearly 137,000 students and families.

When you consider the timeline and cost estimates to clear our capital improvement program backlog, this bill is a promising and encouraging step in the right direction to improve the adequacy of our school facilities. Our core mission remains to educate children. Every day, staff, parents and students enter our buildings expecting a quality education in facilities equipped to meet their needs now and in the future. House Bill 1 will support our efforts towards meeting that expectation and we appreciate your partnership.

Thank you.