



Promoting Maryland Architecture Since 1965

24 February, 2020

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Appropriations Committee Chair
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB615
Education-School Construction-Pedestrian Safety Plans

Dear Delegate McIntosh, and Members of the Appropriations Committee;

We are writing to voice AIA Maryland's support of House Bill 615. AIA Maryland represents nearly 2000 architects in the state of Maryland, and many of our member firms assist with planning and design of schools for the state. AIA recognizes the value of quality planning and built environment, providing safe routes to school is a very important aspect of community planning and it needs to be carefully considered when any school is built or added to. This bill that requires a public process to identify existing and potential safe routes to public school aligns with our aim of providing welcome and equitable access to public learning environments. One of the defining attributes of a successful public school is often a supportive community environment and this bill helps to promote walkable paths to encourage active community engagement and safer access. A vehicle or bus should not be considered the primary means of accessing community schools and this bill helps to ensure that those who can walk or bicycle to school, may have a safe passage.

Buildings can have a positive impact on health and wellness when planned properly, and this bill takes proper initiatives to think before building. Thoughtful placement of buildings and walkable paths provide a greater percentage of the population with the ability to arrive at school of their own means and that can have the added benefit of reducing transportation costs as well as health benefits. Research shows that active living discourages sedentary lifestyles and starting early with schools may help to establish healthy behaviors that are more likely to continue into adulthood.

AIA Maryland cares deeply about the quality of Maryland's built environment, particularly space that houses our future generations. It's important that we plan well and support schools that are healthy for the community and for the students. We therefore respectfully ask your committee to support HB615 that provides safe routes for all new schools or schools with additions that add 100 students or more.

Sincerely

Chris Parts, AIA
Past President, AIA Maryland

cc: Appropriations Committee:

Michael A. Jackson, Vice Chair
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