



USGBC
2101 L STREET, NW
SUITE 500
WASHINGTON DC 20037
202 828-7422
USGBC.ORG

FOUNDERS

David Gottfried
Michael Italiano
S. Richard Fedrizzi

February 19, 2020

Chairman Paul Pinsky
Chair, Education and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: U.S. Green Building Council Support for Amendment to SB 655

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the EHEA Committee:

On behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a non-profit organization with nearly 9,000 member companies nationwide, and our strong community in Maryland, the below are our comments **in support of the amendment to SB 655**. USGBC also supports the high performance building and net zero provisions in SB 926, Climate Solutions Act of 2020, and if appropriate folding the third-party certification requirements of this bill into SB 926.

USGBC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated, enabling an environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous world. Best known for the successful Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) green building certification system, we leverage our education, credentials, events, communications, and policy advocacy activities to support the public and private sectors in advancing high-performance, cost-effective, buildings that save energy, water and money. A core area of our work is green schools, public schools that are well designed, and constructed to facilitate learning, health and wellness, and decrease operating budgets through reduced utility costs.

Historically Maryland has long been a leader in green schools. However, unfortunately a phrase changed in a large bill two years ago threatens Maryland's green schools' leadership. Prior to this change, state-funded public schools in Maryland fell under the state green building program, and were required to achieve and obtain green building certification, with several options available, or meet the IgCC code. The enactment of the 21st Century Schools Act however, required the Maryland Green Building Council, a state entity, to establish green school guidelines achieving the equivalent of, but without certification; thus school projects are being built without the benefit of green school verification processes.

The guidelines established by the Maryland Green Building Council in October 2019 are not equivalent to achieving LEED certification. The only requirement in the Guidelines is for an architect or engineer to note that the project meets one of the previous compliance paths. This removes any accountability or verification that the school will be built as a leadership standard high performing school.

Independent-third party verification is a crucial step in building high performing schools. Certification provides valuable transparency and assurance to the State Legislature and to the public that tax dollars are being used to deliver the high performing schools by



verifying project teams are delivering on key aspects of design plans and goals. This accountability is needed to optimize the ability for each school to have the beneficial cost/benefit, health, and environmental outcomes previously outlined. For example, for LEED, construction teams receive complete review by subject matter experts including confirmation of energy performance and design which is crucial to optimize systems and realize lower operating costs.

In 2008, the fiscal impact of the high-performance building standard was expected to add between 2% and 5% of total project costs. Today, the Fiscal Note for SB 655 indicates that the cost differential between “green” buildings and other buildings has lessened considerably with the growth of green building codes and construction practices. SB 655’s Fiscal Note also notes that, “the cost of once again having to get third party certified to LEED Silver status for public school buildings is only a small fraction of total project costs, and thus little or no noticeable effect on local capital expenditures.”

Finally, according to the 2018 Knott report findings, it is imperative for Maryland school districts to stretch available dollars by constructing green buildings with lower operating costs and by using cost-effective green building technologies. Certified green buildings do just that. For example, for Cherry Hill Elementary, a LEED Gold certified school, certification guided the project team to add additional wall and roof insulation, better windows, reduced lighting power density, and a highly efficient HVAC system that allowed the project to achieve a 28% energy cost savings.

This amendment to SB 655 is critical for the state in building the highest performing, operationally efficient, and healthy schools, therefore we urge the Committee to support the amendment to SB 655.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Beardsley, Senior Policy Counsel, U.S. Green Building Council

Maren Taylor, Advocacy and Policy Associate, U.S. Green Building Council

Cindy Zork, Director, Maryland Community, U.S. Green Building Council