



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates  
Ways and Means Committee  
March 3, 2020**



**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

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**HB1454: FAVORABLE  
Howard County - Transfer Tax - Rate Increase Authorization Ho. Co. 26-20**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB1454 Howard County - Transfer Tax - Rate Increase Authorization Ho. Co. 26-20** to allow the Howard County Council to increase the transfer tax rate, of which 25% of any increase would be distributed to Howard County schools for capital projects.

While the revenues from such an increase would be subject to the amount of an increase determined by the Council, the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) capital budget, used to both expand capacity to meet growth needs and address aging infrastructure at existing schools, would undoubtedly benefit from this bill.

HCPSS is the fastest growing school system in Maryland in terms of enrollment growth. Yet investment in capital infrastructure has not kept pace with the County's projected enrollment growth. Within two years, the projected enrollment of students will begin to exceed the number of seats available countywide – specifically the 2019 HCPSS Feasibility study indicated the capacity utilization of all high schools combined will begin to exceed 110% beyond 2022, elementary schools by 2028, and middle schools follow suit beyond 2030. In school year 2020-2021, fifteen schools will be above 110% capacity utilization.

These capacity needs are on top of long-awaited priorities such as the Talbott Springs Elementary School replacement, a renovation and addition at Hammond High School, and expansive systemic modernizations. The school system's Long-Range Master Plan, looking at 10 year capital funding needs, is nearly \$1 billion. Each year we fall short in funding, renovation and new construction fees increase, while enrollment grows and deferred maintenance costs compound.

Similar to the Board's support for HB1409 Howard County - School Facilities Surcharge - Rates Ho. Co. 03-19 during the 2019 session, we appreciate the Howard County Delegation's continued efforts to find revenues to sustain and improve the infrastructure our students, staff, and community members rely on daily.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report of HB1454 from this Committee.