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January 25, 2021

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

RE: HB0086, Capital Projects – High Performance and Green Buildings  
– Alterations (Green Building Restoration Act)

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the  
Appropriations 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, I respectfully offer our comments in support of HB0086. As a Montgomery County, Maryland resident and a proud public school parent, I appreciate your consideration of the following remarks.

USGBC is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to transforming the way buildings and communities are designed, built, and operated in order to enable a more environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous world. USGBC is perhaps best known for our LEED green building certification system, though we also actively advocate for the advancement of high-performing, cost-effective, and resilient buildings – including schools – that save resources and money. A core area of our work is green schools, particularly public schools that are well-designed, constructed, maintained, and operated to facilitate learning, health and wellness, and decrease operating budgets through reduced utility costs.

USGBC supports House Bill 86 (HB0086) that will amend and clarify the green building requirements as it would remove language that requires the Maryland Green Building Council (MDGBC) to “develop guidelines for new public school buildings to achieve the equivalent of... LEED... without requiring an independent certification that the buildings have achieved the required standards.” While this specific language was unnecessary since existing law already did not require independent certification, this current policy puts Maryland public schools at a disadvantage. Upon enactment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Act in 2019,

the MDGBC is required to establish green school guidelines achieving the equivalent of, but without certification. Thus, this policy allows school projects to be built and constructed without the benefit of green building certification processes. Prior to this 2018 change, state-funded public schools in Maryland fell under the state green building program, which required them to earn green building certification or meet the IgCC code.

Independent third-party verification is a critical facet in building high performing schools. Certification like LEED provides valuable transparency and assurance to the Maryland Legislature and to Maryland residents that their tax dollars are being used to support high performing schools by making sure project teams deliver on crucial aspects of design plans and overall goals. By ensuring project teams are accountable, they are best positioned to optimize building systems and design approaches to achieve maximum user benefit.

Since 2008, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) requires new major school construction projects to achieve a minimum of LEED Silver certification. As of 2018, MCPS has 25 LEED certified schools, 23 of which are LEED Gold. Maryvale Elementary School in Rockville recently earned [LEED Silver](#) certification by meeting high standards for public transportation access, energy performance, and incorporation of low-emitting, locally sourced, and recycled materials.

It is critical for all Maryland school districts to utilize available resources to provide maximum benefits for public school students. By ensuring the enactment of this amendment as part of HB0086, the legislature can ensure that Maryland continues to be a leader in sustainability and fiscal responsibility. We urge the swift passage of HB0086 and we offer our expertise in this area if needed.

Sincerely,



Alysson Blackwelder  
Project Manager, Advocacy and Policy  
U.S. Green Building Council  
Bethesda, Maryland Resident

