

January 18, 2021

The Honorable Paul Pinsky  
Chair, Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs (EHEA)  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB0228, Capital Projects – High Performance and Green Buildings – Alterations (Green Building Restoration Act)

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the EHEA Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with my testimony for the amendment to Senate Bill 0228 on State K-12 school construction and the Maryland High Performance Green Building Program. This bill, as amended, will significantly strengthen green building in Maryland and will ensure healthy public schools for all students, teachers and staff and bring fiscal responsibility to school construction.

I am writing as the Chair of the Board for the Maryland Chapter of the US Green Building Council, a non-profit organization with nearly 9,000 member companies nationwide, and roughly 3,500 licensed professionals in Maryland. I am also a parent of a Baltimore City public school student. This bill was developed in coalition with AIA Baltimore, AIA Maryland, USGBC Maryland, and USGBC National. As a professional, MD resident and a parent I understand why green schools matter for the health of students and teachers and for the fiscal responsibility it provides through accountability.

This amendment restores K-12 construction requirements. In 2019, a last-minute change was inserted into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Act (HB1783 in 2019) requiring schools to follow a LEED Silver Guideline without requiring certification, small in wording, but very large in impact. This is a continuation of efforts from 2020 with the amendment to SB 655. The guidelines established by the Maryland Green Building Council in October 2019 are not equivalent to achieving LEED, Green Globes or IgCC certification. 2019 removed accountability or verification that the school will be built as a leadership standard high performing school which is a pivotal step in achieving building performance and return on investment. A savings of roughly \$0.10 per square foot, on typical project costs of approximately \$200 per square foot. This amendment allows for an additional path of following the IgCC, which does not have additional costs associated. For this fractional project cost, the USGBC or other certifying body conducts a full third-party review of

all features of the building, ensuring safe, healthy, and efficient schools and public buildings. The wording changes are as small as the project cost. This change in wording fundamentally changed how MD addresses K-12 schools. It required the Maryland Green Building Council to develop guidelines in conjunction with the Interagency School Commission for all K-12 schools. The restrictiveness of the new law compared to the original High Performance Green Building Program, is an additional burden on school districts. The new law is limited to only LEED Building, without certification for K-12 schools. As a sustainability professional representing USGBC, I want to see more options for schools to achieve green school construction, not fewer. This amendment restores the original High Performance Green Building Program which allows for LEED and includes Green Globes or the code supplement IgCC.

SB0228 aims to support all school districts in their path towards building better schools for students and teachers. In doing so it levels the playing field for school districts across the state. LEED credits for schools are tied in to access to public transit. Rural school districts are at a disadvantage. This bill amends the requirement for rural schools from “Silver” to “Certified” in order to forge an equitable path forward.

SB0228 as amended by Senator Hettleman promotes fiscal responsibility and ensures Maryland Schools remain competitive nationally. It ensures schools built through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Act sets students up for success academically through healthier and more effective learning environments. I urge the committee to support SB0228 through swift passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Berman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Berman, LEED GA, GGP  
Co-Chair USGBC Maryland MLAB