



House Bill 783

Public Schools – Mold Assessment and Remediation

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: March 1, 2022

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 783 **with AMENDMENTS**. This bill would require county boards of education to conduct mold assessments upon receipt of a complaint of visual mold and to remediate any infected areas or systems. **Bill amendments could help to leverage state facility funds as the key resource to support remediation when necessary.**

Counties agree with the general merits of the bill to provide the safest conditions for public school staff and students—mold is a dangerous risk to public health and counties take accusations of mold in public schools very seriously. However, counties did have some concerns with the bill as currently drafted and the potential significant cost burden of remediation that could include replacing or repairing major school facility systems like HVAC units and roofs.

MACo was happy to work with the bill sponsors to address these concerns via forthcoming amendments. Working with the bill sponsors, and in consultation with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), MACo identified two existing school construction funding programs that could help support counties to repair or replace major systems that are found to be faulty and the cause of a facility's mold issue: the Healthy School Facility Fund and the Aging Schools Program. The IAC has confirmed via email that both programs can be used to address faulty systems that may be the underlying cause of mold.

As such, MACo supports the amendments introduced by the bill sponsor to include a study, with recommendations, on how the Healthy School Facility Fund and Aging Schools Program could be used as a proper vehicle to address the root causes of mold issues in schools. Providing a study with recommendations will ensure that these funds can be used to help address capital projects to alleviate mold in public schools and could formally confirm that local jurisdictions are able to seek support from the IAC via these two existing funding programs to do so.

Without this amendment and the potential support from the IAC, counties would struggle mightily to meet funding requirements associated with remediation if major systems like HVAC units and roofs are involved. For these reasons, MACo urges a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** on HB 783.