



House Bill 68

Interagency Commission on School Construction – Systemic Renovation Projects – Eligibility

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: February 1, 2022

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 68. This bill would expand eligibility for systemic school project funding as established by the Built to Learn Act and would offer counties greater flexibility in pursuing a variety of systemic projects.

Currently, systemic school projects, such as updating HVAC units, for example, are only eligible for financing under the Supplemental Public School Construction Financing Fund and the Supplemental Public School Construction Facilities Fund if they meet a minimum total cost of \$4 million, a rather arbitrary figure that effectively denies meritorious smaller-scale improvements.

By nature, the current eligibility requirements exclude many important school systemic projects that happen to fall below \$4 million from accessing these funds, and, ultimately, some of these projects have either been delayed or shelved.

HB 68 seeks to sensibly remedy this by eliminating the \$4 million minimum requirement and expanding eligibility to all systemic projects, regardless of size or cost. Not only will this greatly increase counties' flexibility to meet the challenging needs of school revitalization and maintenance of critical systems, as set forth by the Built to Learn Act, but it will also allow them to pursue more of these critical projects by increasing the accessible pool of funding from which they can do so.

Maryland's students deserve to learn in the best and safest school facilities we can provide for them, and systemic upgrades - large and small - deliver on that promise. HB 68 is a reasonable step to do so by giving all systemic projects a fair chance at equal consideration and financing. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 68 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.