

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Carroll and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB40 - Interagency Commission on School Construction

January 19th, 2021

Chairman Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 40, which will require the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) to consider systemic renovations regardless of cost. As it currently stands, the IAC only considers systemic renovation efforts if the projects are valued above \$4M. Due to this requirement, many high-impact, low-cost projects are disqualified.

When we passed the Build to Learn Act of 2020, many of us anticipated funds from revenue bonds being used equally to cover the costs of new construction as well as renovation. Deferred maintenance in our public schools is just as common in Garrett County as it is in Howard County or on the Eastern Shore, so this funding is critical to keeping our students in safe, healthy learning environments. However, last year I spoke to the Howard County Executive and he brought to my attention the fact that several projects in Howard County – including boiler replacements and roofing at several of our elementary schools – fall below this \$4M figure. When I spoke with the Baltimore County Executive, who has submitted his favorable testimony on this bill, he confirmed that many of their projects would be disqualified under the IAC's current interpretation. As such, my legislation would merely clarify this original intent.

Most of these necessary projects that would lose funding by the IAC's new consideration would disproportionately impact the most vulnerable students in our communities. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 40.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester".

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Carroll and Howard Counties