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Baltimore County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children, Youth,  
and Families

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake  
and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
SB588 Capital Projects - High Performance and Green Buildings

The purpose of SB 588 is to ensure that certain state funded capital projects meet high performance building requirements. Expanding upon current law that already requires newly constructed school buildings and community colleges to be high performance buildings, the bill would extend the high performance building requirement to capital projects that have more than 25% of their funding from the state to non-school local capital projects and major public school renovations.

The bill also reinstates the requirement that new public school buildings obtain independent certification to verify that they have been built according to the required standards. Under current law, guidelines do not provide an accountability system to ensure that our schools will be high performing green schools. Even if a project team elects to obtain a letter of opinion, the term “independent third party” is not well defined and makes possible purchasing compliance from unqualified consultants.

Why is it important to have green schools? Whereas standard buildings waste and use tons of materials each year, green buildings minimize waste and use fewer resources. They save water and energy and reduce utility costs while also protecting the health of teachers and students. Green buildings minimize environmental impact, improve health and academic outcomes, are fiscally responsible, and encourage students to become literate about sustainability issues.

A 2018 study by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) found that high performance buildings save energy, save water, cost less to operate, produce less waste, and have more satisfied occupants compared with typical buildings. The high performance buildings showed 23% lower energy use, 28% lower water use, 23% lower building operating expenses, and 9% less waste landfilled.

SB 588 would require once again that green schools be built with an independent certification to verify they have been built according to the required standards. It will also require that other capital projects, including schools, that are built with at least 25% of state funds are to be constructed using either LEED Silver, two Green Globes, or with the 2012 IgCC standards. If we are requiring the use of higher green standards to build schools, we should also hold capital projects that are being built with public funds to those high standards as well. I ask for your support of SB 588. Thank you.