

14 February 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky
Chair of the Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for SB 0588
Capital Projects – High Performance and Green Buildings

Dear Chairman Pinsky and members of the Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

On behalf of AIA Maryland and the nearly 2,000 Architects we represent, we ask for your support of this bill to restore the Maryland Green Building guidelines. Simply stated, this bill restores accountability to the guidelines, and it provides a stronger path for state funded, high performance buildings in Maryland.

HB0588 restores the rigor of independent third-party certification of project for either LEED Silver or 2 Green Globes paths, and it provides a path through IGCC as amended by the MD Green Building Council to be a path without third party certification. These were aspirational goals that were set in 2008 and the process of the third-party certified projects led many teams to not just settle for Silver, but to aim higher and reach LEED Gold, a level above the minimum required. The language added in HB1793 in 2019 diminished the conscientious attention to the original goals by allowing a simple sign off without a third-party review.

Clarity of projects affected by the guidelines is achieved through the language that amends the funding requirement to 25% of the funding from the state. The ambiguity of projects being “funded solely” with state funds has led to confusion and we want there to be no question when the guidelines apply.

As some of our member firms have designed projects in less densely populated locations, we have acknowledged that the rating systems benefit areas with a certain density of development. We do not want to diminish the importance of making smart decisions when planning to locate and develop schools close to population centers, and conversely, we do not want to punish schools for not having sufficient density that allows them to achieve certain credits for their location at no cost. The amended language that allows Certified in lieu Silver ratings for rural jurisdictions, simply levels the playing field. This frees the design team to make decisions in the design process that may have a greater effect on building systems for efficiency and/or occupant health.

We also believe that consistency is important across systems and regulations and this bill takes steps to align with the language of state adopted building codes. The definition of “Major Renovation” simply aligns the bill with the International Building Codes that are adopted by the state and local jurisdictions.

My daughter spent her last year in elementary school in a building that was a product of this legislation and it was by far the best learning environment she had all the way through high school. The Public Schools alone that are part of this program impact nearly 20% of the Maryland residents every day. We strongly believe this path, provides better buildings, greater accountability and greater opportunities to learn about performance and improve upon state funded construction. We are not asking for an easier path to building, or one that provides any more design fees. We simply believe that a program that tracks design consistently through a program like

LEED, Green Globes or the International Green Construction Code has the rigor and input at appropriate times to make the best decisions on projects that will have the greatest long-term impact and will be the wisest use of state funds for construction. For these reasons, we ask for your support of this bill to make wise use of our state funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'C' and 'R' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland