

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Support with Amendments
House Bill 458 –
Public School Construction, Approvals, and Administration – Alterations**

March 28, 2023

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners support with amendments House Bill 458. This legislation is concerning because it repeals the Aging Schools Program and the School Safety Grant program. Each of those programs is extremely helpful to Baltimore City Public Schools.

While each of the programs is to be folded into the larger Nancy Kopp Public School Facilities Priority Fund beginning in FY 2027, the concern arises because the funding for both programs will now be required to have a match. While the Board can understand the IAC's desire to not have to administer such small programs, these small non-matching fund programs is important to a district like Baltimore City.

Everyone acknowledges the funding a facility challenges in the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS.) The BCPSS uses the Aging Schools Program dollars to renovate schools that would not ordinarily meet the strict requirements of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and are smaller than the larger projects in the CIP, but are just as important. The School Safety Grant program allows the school district to fund for lockable doors, surveillance equipment, monitoring equipment, etc.. The Board cannot stress how important these additional dollars are to an urban school district.

Because of the tremendous need in Baltimore City, the children of BCPSS know what it is like to attend school in buildings lacking air conditioning on hot summer days, but yet are expected to take the same test as their counterparts are taking in the comfort of air conditioning. They know about drinking bottled water rather than water from the hallway fountains because of health concerns. They know about having windows so old that you can no longer see through them or insufficient locks to aid in security.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendments House Bill 458.

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