

20 February 2023

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair of the Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Concern for SB 0467
Workgroup to study the Fiscal and Operational Viability of Public-Private Partnerships for
Calvert County Public Schools

Dear Chairman Guzzone and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of AIA Maryland and the nearly 2,000 Architects we represent, we wish to express our concern with exploring Public Private Partnerships for School Construction in Calvert County Maryland. Understanding the motivation for Public Private Partnerships (P3's) is critical. Generally, the interest for a P3 is to deliver a project, or multiple projects very quickly and to aim to push some of the risk to the development entity. While we recognize that a workgroup is not necessarily a directive to proceed, we wish to express our concerns with this project delivery means.

P-3 projects are very complicated entities, they tend to work well with very large scale and repetitive projects. It seems that the likely that multiple school projects of a nearly identical nature may not match well with the needs of many Maryland jurisdictions, and specifically the needs of Calvert County. Numerous jurisdictions, including the UK, Canada and Australia have begun P-3 school construction programs and have reverted back to their prior means of building and managing schools, often citing poor management, little to no cost savings and community discontent. The Calvert County school system is thirteenth in size of school jurisdictions in Maryland, so it seems unlikely that multiple, simultaneous projects that may allow for duplication of designs in any one Maryland jurisdiction. Additionally, when repetitive designs are constructed, they may have a considerably different site orientation which can impact energy efficiency and effective classroom daylighting for the life of a project. Most schools in Maryland are retained and operational for well over 50 years and we believe all jurisdictions deserve a project to meet their own specific needs and be well sited to operate effectively for learning.

The cost of pursuing a P3 project is an enormous risk. For example, one Maryland design firm considered pursuing the design contract for the Prince Georges County P-3 projects in partnership with the leading construction firm, and they opted not to, recognizing that nearly 1 million dollars of up-front

design work was required for the submission package and that design work was fully at risk. The cost of pursuing P-3 projects often leads to out of state entities being contracted for services. Whether it be counsel, design, engineering or construction, P-3 entities are complex and they require significant commitment to up-front costs to pursue. The Prince Georges County P-3 contracts for example, engaged with a prime architectural design firm based in Canada. Yes, there is a small local office of the selected design firm, but the volume of work associated with those projects is unlikely to be able to be addressed locally with the limited staff residing in Maryland. We believe it is important for publicly funded projects in Maryland to aim to provide opportunities for Maryland based businesses

We appreciate your focus on efficient use of tax dollars for the design and construction of schools. We believe the talent and skills to design, construct and operate those school projects to meet the specific needs of the communities can be best met locally. We hope you will consider our input as you consider this legislation and think as to which path will build stronger communities in our home state of Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Parts', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President