



Kent County Board of Education

Growing a Community of Leaders

February 2, 2024

The Honorable Benjamin S. Barnes
The Honorable Mark S. Chang
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1912

**RE: SUPPORT FOR HB0365 School Construction – Local Cost-Share -
Alterations**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

This letter provides written testimony in support for House Bill 0365 School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations.

Kent County Public schools strives each day to provide to our students with a quality education and provide to the best of our abilities the necessary resources and services that will give our students the very best opportunity to be contributing citizens as they leave our care after graduation.

We have done this during some of the most difficult times that a school system can endure but it has worked. The demographics of our County has changed drastically over the last 20 years. We have faced and increase in families who are considered to be in poverty, 30% to 70%. We have faced a declining student population which in turn has affected funding, all the while providing the very best education possible. These and more issues for our small county has caused us to make drastic cuts by closing schools, eliminating positions and reviewing all aspects of our budget to stretch the dollar as much as we could year after year.

In 2018, Kent County Public Schools established a Six-Year Facilities Strategic Plan. As a Board Member, I am proud to say that with the help of our County leadership, we have been able to complete all that we set out do. The last item in our plan is to replace our only Middle School, which is 70+ years old.

In consultation with experts, our aged Middle School is now at a point that investing money into the building would be a misuse of funds as we have now crossed into a space that building a new Middle School would be cheaper.

Kent County is facing multiple issues due to funding and upcoming mandated requirements. The current 50/50 cost-share plan is not something that the citizens of Kent County can absorb. It would create a burden that with a median household income of \$27,000 across our county, our citizens cannot take that hit. HB0365 would assist us in the cost-share burden by providing additional state funding.

A new Middle School would provide our students with a new educational environment that would be infinitely better for learning. It would eliminate the structural deficiencies and educational deficiencies that are kids experience each day.

Please send HB0365 forward with a favorable recommendation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Goetz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph Goetz
School Board President
Kent County Public Schools Board of Education

Cc: House Appropriations Committee Members
The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs
The Honorable Steven J. Arentz
The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist
The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr
The Kent County Board of Education
Dr. Karen M. Couch