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Chestertown, MD 21620

February 2, 2024

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Delegate Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair
Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Rom 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: HB 365 – School Construction - Local Cost-Share - Alterations

Position: Support

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

I am writing in support of HB 365 because construction funding for a new Kent County Middle School is extremely important to this community.

The school is almost 75 years old and is in dire need of replacement, not renovation. The physical teaching environment is a critical component of overall education. Our students are not well served – in fact they are underserved -- in the existing facility. Kent County has one of the highest poverty levels in the state. Because of this, it is above the Maryland average in free or reduced-price meals and in the Community Eligibility Provision. While it is one of six counties eligible for the 50/50 funding, Kent County itself is not able to underwrite this amount and we must look to the State to help.

I urge a favorable report on HB 365.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Spence