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February 2, 2024

House Appropriations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
State House
1 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21441

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today as the Director of the Kent Cultural Alliance based in Chestertown, Maryland in Kent County, and as a resident of Kent County, in Worton, MD.

I ask you to pass favorable judgement on HB 365, the School Construction - Local Cost Share - Alterations bill sponsored by District 36 Delegates Jay Jacobs, Steve Arentz, and Jeff Ghrist, as well as Senator Steve Hershey via his cross file SB 110.

As Kent County's designated arts council, we have extensive partnerships with the Kent County Public Schools. We know well the deteriorating conditions of our aging buildings, and the challenges we face as Maryland's smallest and most rural county, with nearly 30% of the population over 65. The cost share alterations will put our students, faculty and staff on equal footing with excellent facilities found in wealthier and more populous portions of the state of Maryland.

Please support this bill keeping in mind the needs of Kent County's students, where three of our five public schools are Title 1 Schools, and where, as a rural county, opportunities for cost sharing, and engaging partnerships with well organized and well funded entities is limited.

The Kent Cultural Alliances stands with the Kent County Public Schools in our demand for a solid, well rounded public education. Replacing the Kent County Middle School is critical, but we have one shot, and the State of Maryland can now, through this bill, ensure that we do it right.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Schratwieser", is written over the printed name.

John Schratwieser, Director