

March 24, 2025

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

RE: Support for SB843 School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations

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

I am writing to you today in support of House Bill 0736, School Construction - Local Cost-Share - Alterations.

I have already submitted testimony of the House Bill that was cross listed, so you have already heard from me (and a lot of other people) about the challenges that a small county like Kent County faces trying to cover the cost of a big building project like this.

However, I would like to add a more personal note this time around. I grew up in Kent County and attended the same middle school 40 years ago (when the school was already long in the tooth). My two older kids have gone through the middle school and are now at Kent County High, I have one currently in 7th grade at the middle school, and a 2nd grader headed there in a few years. The fact that they are attending an even more run-down school than I did means that we are failing these kids (and their teachers). This is even more heartbreaking because I have seen first-hand the hard work and dedication our leadership team is putting in to try to reverse a long downward slide, only to be sidetracked by problems with the building: ceiling leaks, plumbing issues, heat and ac problems, and sometimes literal holes in the floor.

I am considered a successful product of a Kent County education. I attended Williams College, am a professional children's book illustrator and nationally recognized literacy advocate for Title I schools (see: Busload of Books). I returned to Kent County to raise my family and in spite of the pockets of great wealth that exist here, have seen the steep decline in support for our public schools alongside the steady rise of poverty. A new middle school building will not only benefit our students and teachers by giving them a healthy, safe and comfortable environment to work in (which honestly should be the bare minimum that we provide!) but will also encourage more families to consider a move here, revitalizing our community so that maybe next time we need a school we can afford to pay for more of it ourselves.

If you don't help us, we actually don't have the funds to do it. There simply aren't enough of us.

Thank you,
Robbi Behr
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