



24 January 2025

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair of the Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB 0061
Public School Construction and Renovation - Solar Canopies for School Parking Lots – Underground
Infrastructure

Dear Chairman Barnes and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to voice AIA Maryland's support for House Bill 0061 –Public School Construction and Renovation Solar Canopies for School Parking Lots. AIA Maryland represents nearly 2,000 architects in the state of Maryland and advocates for the profession and the quality of the built environment. Many of our architect members play an important role in planning and design of new and renovated public school buildings. These properties are owned and operated by their respective jurisdictions, and they rarely get updated more frequently than every 20 years and most remain in service for 50-100 years or more. Missing an opportunity to place important infrastructure on a property when it is most cost effective is a significant opportunity lost. While we recognize that this puts a very small add to a capital budget in each jurisdiction to install the infrastructure, the payback on that investment when implemented would be extremely short.

Maryland residents are acutely aware of the rapidly increasing utility costs and the higher energy burden that affects all of us. In my jurisdiction, Baltimore County, it was just reported last week that the County School operating funds for gas and electric in the next fiscal year are projected to increase by \$6.5 million. Similarly, Harford County is facing a \$3 million in energy costs.

Most primary and middle schools designed today to current target Energy Use Intensity levels (EUI) of 18kBtu per square foot, can meet their site energy needs through rooftop solar collectors on less than half of their roof area, but many high schools require more than their available roof area to meet their on-site energy needs. Enabling solar arrays in parking areas would enable these buildings to either meet their needs without rooftop solar, or it may allow them to be a net provider of energy that could be addressed in a number of ways to distribute energy back into the grid.

This legislation makes sense to enable us to move the state forward toward our greenhouse gas reduction goals through enabling more clean energy and enabling it to be used or fed back into the grid for local distribution.

The key points of this legislation are:

- Schools are facing much higher operating costs through increased energy costs required in operating funds.
- Increasing opportunities to generate renewable energy on site, and on under-utilized space may provide a means to fully meet site energy needs with renewable energy and possibly to feed excess energy back into the grid.

- Installing the underground infrastructure when other site and parking lot work is being done is very cost effective and it adds very little total cost to a school project
- Providing a low cost backbone to implement solar energy collection on school sites provides the opportunity to use money for education, that would have otherwise been spent on increasing operational costs.

Choosing the right time to build infrastructure can have a big impact in reducing overall costs. This legislation helps us move toward state goals for green energy and in doing so, it has the added benefit of providing the opportunity for reducing school operational costs to enable more money to serve our residents and their children. We hope and achieving the Greenhouse Gas reduction goals established in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. We are pleased to support this bill and we ask for your to vote in favor of HB 0061.

Sincerely,

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

Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland