

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Ben Barnes
The Honorable Mark S. Chang
121 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB0843 School Construction – Local Cost-Share – Alterations

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

I am writing to you today in support of Senate Bill 0843, School Construction - Local Cost-Share - Alterations.

This bill would make it possible for our community to build the new middle school that we desperately need. Currently, the state would split the costs for a new school 50-50 with the county. With construction costs budgeted between \$60 and \$70 million, that is a burden our Kent County community of less than 20,000 residents cannot afford.

The state set the 50/50 split because a formula shows Kent County to be very wealthy, but all five of our schools have high rates of poverty. Every student in each of our schools gets free breakfast and lunch because of our poverty rates.

We have one middle school — Kent County Middle School — serving all the children of our county. It opened in 1950 and the maintenance costs we are paying every year is money that would be much better spent on a new building. The building had to be shut down and classes canceled for three days this school year for plumbing issues. When it rains, water leaks in. One room is freezing cold and the next room over is boiling hot. Kent County Middle School's classrooms do not meet the needs of today's students. They are not suitable by today's educational standards.

Our kids deserve better, especially during their middle school years. A new Kent County Middle School will revive our school system and our local economy. I urge you to support the passage of Senate Bill 0843.

Thank you,
Frank Rhodes
Kent County Board of Education
Chestertown
frhodes@kent.k12.md.us