



February 28, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing in support of SB0843 to increase the State's contribution for construction funding in counties meeting certain criteria. Our specific interest is in Kent County, which currently receives the minimum state share of school construction funding (50%), while other similar counties are at levels such as 85 – 100%. This bill serves to address this issue and revises the funding %.

A new school project in Kent County is long overdue. The current Kent County Middle School was built in 1950 and last renovated in 1976. This makes the original building 73 years old and the renovations 47 years old. With an aging facility, concerns such as safety/security, ADA compliance, energy efficiency, access to natural daylight for the students, efficient learning designs, etc, are at the forefront of needs. It is past time for a new middle school in Kent County.

Schools are not only critical for the future of our children, they are also an integral part of a community and contribute greatly to economic prosperity. Education and the local school system are major factors in recruitment and retention of employees as well as attracting new businesses and job creation. Kent County has significant room for improvement in these areas. Dixon Group is one of the largest employers in the area (we employ 1,600 worldwide; approx. 500 in Maryland), and recruitment and retention of employees is crucial to our success. In order to recruit and retain employees (for Dixon, Washington College, UMD Shore Hospital Center and other local businesses), the local school system needs improvement in various areas, especially our aging facilities. Up-to-date, safe, clean, green facilities will improve the education of the students as well as help to recruit and retain teachers and administrators, bolster economic development, and aid employers in their recruitment and retention of skilled workers.

A project of this size is a major financial challenge for such a small county. Kent County has the smallest population, the smallest GDP, and the smallest annual government budget of all counties in Maryland. The ability of the County to fund the construction of a new Middle School is questionable at the current 50% level. It seems that the construction funding formula for Kent County has simply been overlooked over time, and with the possibility of the first school construction project in 50 years, now is the time to increase it. We owe it to the students, staff and families in Kent County!

I am happy to discuss this further if desired. I can be reached at 410-810-1574 or kgray@dixonvalve.com . Thank you for your time and consideration!

Regards –

Kate Goodall Gray
Community & Government Relations
The Dixon Group

The Dixon Group, Inc.

1 Dixon Square
Chestertown, MD 21620
dixonvalve.com

ph 410.778.2000
800.355.1991
fax 410.778.7638