
ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

February 13, 2026

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

RE: Opposition to House Bill 562 – Primary and Secondary Education – Maintenance of Effort – Inflation Adjustment

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of the citizens of Harford County to respectfully express strong opposition to House Bill 562.

Harford County remains committed to supporting strong public schools and providing meaningful investment in education. Education represents the largest share of our county budget, and we have consistently demonstrated our support for students, educators, and families. However, HB 562 would impose a significant new financial mandate on local governments by requiring an automatic annual inflation adjustment to the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement, regardless of local economic conditions or fiscal realities.

This legislation fundamentally alters the balance between state and local budget authority by creating a permanent, state-imposed spending escalator on county governments. Under HB 562, counties would be required to increase education funding each year even when revenues are flat, enrollment is declining, or other critical local priorities demand attention. While costs may rise with inflation, county revenues do not always rise at the same pace, and this bill ignores the fiscal constraints local governments face when building balanced budgets.

Harford County, like many jurisdictions, must balance competing responsibilities including public safety, infrastructure, public health, parks, and core county services. By mandating automatic increases to education funding without corresponding state funding support, HB 562 shifts financial risk from the state onto local taxpayers. This represents a

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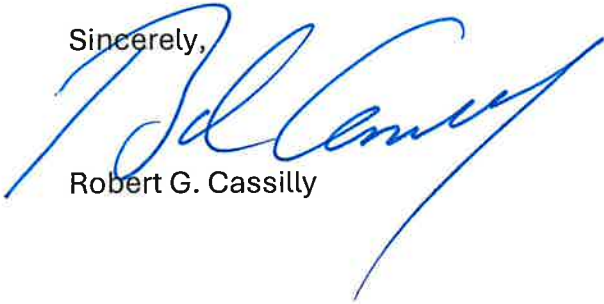
Page 2

significant unfunded mandate that diminishes local budget flexibility and could ultimately force counties to reduce services or increase local taxes.

Local elected officials are in the best position to make responsible funding decisions that reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. The current Maintenance of Effort framework already ensures consistent support for education while allowing counties the flexibility needed to respond to changing economic conditions. HB 562 removes that flexibility and imposes a one-size-fits-all solution that fails to recognize the realities of local governance.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 562.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Cassilly