



House Bill 665

Public School Construction and State Buildings – Use of Geothermal Energy

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: February 27, 2020

From: Drew Jabin

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 665. This bill would place a costly mandate on county governments to carry out new state policy to install geothermal energy systems during construction of public schools as well as for any construction that uses at least 50% state funds.

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. HB 665 would implement a costly, difficult mandate for county governments to install geothermal energy systems in all future school construction projects. Under this proposed law, counties would have no choice but to adhere to the policy, irrespective of the viability or efficiency of this energy option.

Another route to pursue similar outcomes, which counties would not oppose, would be to create a mandatory *consideration* for state-funded projects and school construction. If part of the state's facility approval process included a checklist that the facility has been considered as a candidate for certain potentially desirable inclusions (including, in this case, energy-efficient facilities like solar or geothermal) – counties would accede to this standard to promote these worthy goals.

This bill, as written, represents a significant unfunded mandate for county governments, and may force inefficient or poorly-suited facility expansions. Counties agree that studying renewable energy sources is important in understanding what is the most efficient, reasonable option for each site, but this legislation goes too far in mandating one standard to all projects. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 665 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.