



## **Senate Bill 611**

### *Education – Healthy School Facility Fund – Established*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs Committee

Date: February 27, 2018

From: Robin Clark Eilenberg

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 611. This legislation establishes a Healthy School Facility Fund to provide grants to public schools to improve the health of school facilities. The governor must include \$15 million in the Healthy School Facility Fund each year from fiscal 2018 through 2024. No school district may receive more than \$5 million in a given year, and the total amount of a grant is not required to cover the full cost of a project.

Maryland counties partner with the State on school construction funding, with the counties providing substantially more than the State each year. According to the Department of Legislative Services, counties contributed more than \$2 billion for school construction statewide from fiscal 2013 through 2015. With more than 50% construction cost increases over the past five years, however, it has been difficult for counties and the State to keep pace with school construction needs.

The State's school facilities are an average age of 29 years, a statistic that belies many schools much older than 29 years and still in regular use. Issues such as heating failures, air quality concerns, mold, and temperature fluctuations frequently plague aging schools. Investment in updated systems and infrastructure improvements in these areas contributes to healthy learning environments. Addressing these building issues may also provide long-term cost-savings for counties, school boards, and the State of Maryland with improved energy efficiency and extended facility life.

The State's commitment to school construction funding needs to remain strong and smart to best serve the modern needs of our schoolchildren. This grant program, which aims to fix critical building needs, supports equal access to facilities that meet basic health standards, providing a foundation for educational success. For this reason, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 611.