



Senate Bill 988

State Department of Education - Assessment Report for Broadband Capabilities in Public Schools

MACo Position: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

Date: March 12, 2014

To: Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Robin J. Clark

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 988 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This legislation would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to report by December 1, 2014, on existing broadband speeds and connections in all public schools in the state. With that deadline, it would also require MSDE to issue a report on each local school system's plan to reach a broadband speed of 1 gigabyte per 1,000 students for each public school by fiscal year 2020 through public and private efforts.

The Maryland State Department of Education plans to begin to replace the standard Maryland State Assessments with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in the 2014-2015 school year. In a recent report, however, local school systems estimated \$100 million in needed technology to administer the PARCC assessments, including the cost of devices, wireless networks, and other IT infrastructure upgrades. The report also found that based on a sample of 11 local school systems, only 14% possessed the recommended bandwidth to administer the PARCC assessments.

MACo supports the General Assembly's request for additional information regarding the preparedness of our schools to implement the PARCC assessments. As described above, however, it is anticipated that attaining the technology, including increases in bandwidth, for implementation of the PARCC assessments will require significant investment. For this reason, MACo asks that, in addition to information on broadband infrastructure needs, the report include recommendations of appropriate State and private resources to fund the required investment. Private partnership and State contributions could provide the resources needed for implementation of the Maryland State Department of Education's PARCC assessments statewide.

For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS SB 988 WITH AMENDMENTS** and recommends the Committee issue a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**.