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**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the  
Maryland House of Delegates  
Appropriations Committee  
For the Hearing on  
Public Schools - Sprinkler Systems – Required  
(HB 226)  
February 6, 2018**

**SUPPORT WITH CAUTION**

Maryland PTA represents thousands of volunteer members and families in 900 public schools. For nearly 103 years, our mission has been to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Maryland PTA is comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization, Maryland PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education.

**Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support with caution of House Bill 226 – Public Schools – Sprinkler Systems - Required.** This bill requires all public schools have installed sprinkler systems by October 1, 2018. However, because such a retrofit of at least 330 schools is estimated to cost local jurisdictions \$495 million, Maryland PTA recognizes, along with the Department of Legislative Services, that such a requirement may not be possible to accomplish given this time frame.

Maryland PTA has maintained a long-standing position that the health, safety and welfare of students is tantamount to student achievement. Capital projects to improve safety within public school facilities is unquestionably important. And, since school facilities are a capital asset constituting a large investment of public funds, the Maryland PTA desires that all school facilities encourage community utilization and involvement. Nonetheless, Maryland PTA is concerned about the possibility of retrofitting all applicable schools to have sprinklers installed, especially within such a short duration of time.

House bill 226 is in the right direction of protecting students should any event occur that would require the use of sprinklers on the ground of public schools. Yet, Maryland PTA cautions that passing such a bill at this time may provide an impossible task to accomplish in just a matter of eight months. We believe that a gradual implementation of installing sprinklers would be more attainable and with State fiscal support, especially for distressed counties. Maryland PTA will continue to support any legislation and all school districts that seek to improve school safety by implementing sprinkler systems.

It is for these reasons above that Maryland PTA encourages your vote to *support with caution* House Bill 226.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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