Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland Senate
Budget and Taxation Committee
Build to Learn Act of 2019
(HB 727)

Mar. 27, 2019

SUPPORT

Maryland PTA is the state’s oldest and largest child advocacy organization that serves as a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We represent thousands of volunteer members in 900 public schools and we are 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. For nearly 104 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 submits this testimony in support of House Bill 727 - Build to Learn Act of 2019. In short, this bill allocates $2.2 billion statewide toward school construction.

The proposed $2.2 billion authorization comes in the form of a 30-year Maryland Stadium Authority bond for school construction projects statewide over the next 4 to 5 years, which more than doubles the annual “regular” school construction funding. Every jurisdiction in the state would benefit from this bill. Because this bill requires that local education authorities give priority to older schools with significant facility deficiencies, high concentrations of impoverished students, and overcrowded schools, Maryland PTA believes this bill helps address concerns pertaining to environmental school safety and supports opportunities for physical security measures.

Maryland PTA believes that HB 727 affirms that adequate school facilities are not only crucial to the success of Maryland public schools, but they are also a reflection of and resource for the population in which they are located. Because funding is prioritized in the aforementioned manner, large investments of public funds in capital assets like school facilities build communities and encourage community involvement.

The current version of this bill is the third iteration of a major injection of school construction spending that the General Assembly has considered this year. This legislation closely followed the Governor’s proposal, but identified lottery proceeds, not casino revenues, as the funding source, and wrested control for funding allocations from the Board of Public Works. This bill establishes new content defining the percentage of funding that county governments may be allocated in the new program. The Build to Learn Act of 2019 changes the funding program, by codifying certain percentage distributions of the new funding to the State’s seven largest jurisdictions, while reserving the remaining 7.9 percent for projects from the State’s other seventeen counties. The funding percentages are as follows:
Baltimore City as well as Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s Counties – 18.2%;
Anne Arundel County - 11.4%;
Howard County – 4.5%;
Frederick County – 3.4%;
All other counties - 7.9%

Maryland PTA values the entire state being provided funding based on student population size as well because it recognizes that educational facilities, thru school construction, can stimulate learning and help incorporate innovative curriculum and methods into the classroom. We urge that local educational authorities require schools to create adaptable classrooms which foster the use of current technology and accommodate various teaching and learning styles. The essence of HB 727 gives rise to prioritizing reasonable investments in facilities that are safe, well-equipped, and sufficiently maintained.

While in support of House Bill 727, Maryland PTA encourages administrators, educators, parents, students, and community leaders to work together with their architects to design new or renovated facilities that are tailored to their specific needs. It is for these reasons that Maryland PTA requests a favorable vote for HB 727.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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