

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 1295 Public School Construction – School District Energy Use – Policy and Study

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Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) supports HB 1295. Each school district in Maryland should have an energy policy to reduce costs and protect the environment. For many districts, utilities are the second-largest budget item, after salaries, and the greenhouse gases released as a result of a district’s energy use are significant. The oft-quoted adage “If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it” certainly applies to any effort to reduce utility consumption, costs, and emissions. A district-level policy will describe expectations, set goals, and measure progress.

Procuring more energy from renewable sources is beneficial to the environment, reduces dependency on the grid, and supports the renewable energy sector in Maryland. City Schools procures about 3% of its electricity from an off-site solar farm and follows all state mandates regarding renewable energy.

Schools across the state are of varying ages and have many different building systems. This means some schools are highly energy efficient while others are less so. Calculating energy use by square foot allows districts to identify inefficient buildings and reduce waste by either improving performance and/or better directing retrofits. City Schools has used this tool to make changes in operations and maintenance practices, and to direct lighting and HVAC upgrades.

Supporting additional net zero energy schools is important. City Schools has two schools opening in August 2020 that will be net zero energy, and we are excited that over the course of each year, each school will generate the amount of electricity it uses through rooftop solar panels.

We propose three small changes to the bill, as follows:

- Modify Section 1(B)(3) to read: “Include current and historical data on the school district’s energy use BY SQUARE FOOT.” This will capture all energy use, not just electricity use, which is required in Section 1, (B)(2)(III).
- Add a Section 1(B)(4) to read: “DISTRICTS SHOULD UTILIZE LIFE CYCLE COST ANALYSIS (LCCA) WHEN DECIDING ON BUILDING SYSTEMS DURING INITIAL CONSTRUCTION OR RENOVATIONS.” This will require Districts to consider both upfront costs and long-term energy costs of systems; sometimes a higher initial investment will be cheaper in the long run, once energy and maintenance costs are included in the analysis.
- Modify Section 1(D)(2) to read: “Updated every THREE years.” An update every three years is reasonable and reduces the compliance burden.

There is an added benefit of an energy policy. Districts have an opportunity to educate students to be stewards of the environment as well as stewards of their family's wallet. Student and staff awareness are crucial because though a building can be designed and constructed to be energy efficient, it may not be operated in an efficient manner. When our students learn about renewable versus non-renewable energy, the implications of burning fossil fuels, and ways to use less energy at school and at home, they can help save money. And, they come to understand their relationship to their local, regional, and global ecosystem and the specific and positive steps they can take.

Baltimore City Public Schools adopted its Sustainability Policy in 2016, which includes an Administrative Regulation about Energy, Water and Resource Conservation. We encourage you to visit www.baltimorecityschools.org/sustainability to read about our work underway.

For all these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report of HB 1295.

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