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BILL: Senate Bill 1243
TITLE: 21st Century School Facilities Act
DATE: March 15, 2018
POSITION: Support with Amendments
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
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Senate Bill 1243 alters the requirements for awarding contracts to bidders for school buildings; requiring the Interagency Committee on School Construction to conduct a certain facility assessment; specifying the process for the review and approval of public school construction projects; establishing the Local Share of School Construction Costs Revolving Loan Fund to provide loans to local governments to forward fund the local share of school construction costs; declaring the intent of the General Assembly regarding funding for school construction; etc.

PSSAM thanks the sponsors for this legislation and **supports with amendments** Senate Bill 1243.

Representatives from PSSAM had the honor of participating on the 21st Century School Facilities Commission for nearly two years. The work of this Commission was comprehensive and PSSAM is grateful to see so many of the recommendations from the Commission's Final Report issued in January 2018. We fully support the inclusion of Recommendations # 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 14 in the legislation. We are extremely grateful for the inclusion of Recommendation #2, which increases the funding for school construction to \$400 million annually as feasible. This is definitely a step in the right direction to address the serious school construction, renovation, and maintenance needs across the state.

PSSAM is requesting several critically important amendments to the bill as proposed. These suggestions reflect extensive conversations among superintendents and our facilities staff regarding areas in the bill that go beyond the recommendations of the Knott Commission and which create serious concern.

PSSAM respectfully requests that the language beginning on page 19 Line 15 through page 21 Line 17 be removed and replaced by language that more fully aligns with Recommendation #1 from the Final Report of the Knott Commission. This change is requested because of the controversy around developing a ranking system for every elementary and secondary school in the state based on a school facilities index. Several presentations regarding this concept were shared at with the Knott Commission and with facilities personnel across the state. Superintendents discussed this extensively as well and feel strongly that there will be an unintentional negative impact from this ranking system.

We agree that having standards for the maintenance of school facilities and developing a statewide database for entering common data about every school in the state is a good idea. This can provide valuable information to the state in conjunction with the Education Facilities Master Plan which outlines local priorities for school construction funding. This was the goal of Recommendation #1 in the Commission's Final Report.

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The Commission did not support the development of a statewide school facilities index being used to rank schools. The concern expressed by Commission members and echoed by superintendents and facilities staff was that the ranking would become a State priority list that may override local priorities and actually penalize LEAs who have done an excellent job with preventive maintenance—an area which the Commission believed should be incentivized. Currently, the IAC honors and recognizes the local prioritization of projects and provides an equitable distribution of State funds to multiple LEAs. Superintendents lack confidence that moving to a ranking system will achieve equity or honor local prioritization.

The second amendment that PSSAM proposes is to eliminate the language on page 29 Lines 5 and 6, “whether to reduce or eliminate State support for systemic renovations to focus available resources on major construction projects; and...” Superintendents are gravely concerned about the impact of the loss of State funds to support systemic renovations. Even though the legislation recommends this be studied, PSSAM members adamantly oppose any consideration of eliminating State funding for systemic renovations.

The third amendment that PSSAM proposes is language be added to Section 7 a Workgroup on Educational Development Specifications. Conversation by the Knott Commission and among superintendents recognized the importance of considering the lifetime cost of maintenance for facilities when examining cost effectiveness. It may be prudent to have the Workgroup examine specifications that address this factor as well.

PSSAM is grateful for the emphasis the legislature has placed on 21st Century School Facilities by first establishing the Commission and now by creating legislation to support so many of the recommendations of the Knott Commission. We seek amendments to better align the legislation with the comprehensive work of the Knott Commission, and hope the committee will consider the amendments we have proposed so that we can fully support the legislation.

In conclusion, PSSAM **supports with amendments** Senate Bill 1243 and urges a favorable committee report.