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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

March 6, 2014

The Honorable Norman H. Conway
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Support for House Bill 1323 - Supplemental Public School Construction
Matching Fund Program**

Dear Chairman Conway:

Over the past seven years Maryland has made record investments in our public schools. With your support, we've increased the annual operating dollars by \$1.5 billion and made record investments in school construction – investing over \$2.3 billion, an average of \$340 million per year. We have also greatly exceeded the \$250 million annual investment recommended by the Kopp Commission. Last year, working with the General Assembly and our local partners in Baltimore City, we passed the Baltimore City Public Schools Construction and Revitalization Act, enabling the City to invest \$1.1 billion in order to modernize its schools.

But for all of our progress, we still have work to do. According to the Maryland Interagency Committee on School Construction the average age of Maryland schools ranges from 14.3 years in Talbot County to 41.3 years in Kent County. In some of our largest jurisdictions, the average age is over 20 years; 24.1 in Montgomery County, 32.4 in Baltimore County, 35.8 in Prince George's County and 40.2 in Baltimore City.

Together, we must find innovative ways to expand our school construction program so that every Maryland child has the opportunity to learn from a highly qualified educator in a modern and safe environment. This includes increasing our annual school construction budget and leveraging our State and local operating and capital dollars in an effective and responsible manner, which is mindful of our debt and spending affordability guidelines. House Bill 1323 is a step in that direction.

Chairman Conway
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As the Committee considers House Bill 1323, and other similar efforts to expand our school construction capacity, I urge you to work with all interested stakeholders so that we can continue to improve the best public schools in the nation and provide every child the opportunity to succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AGB Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Anthony G. Brown

AGB/bmw

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Committee
Delegate Anne R. Kaiser