



Feb. 2, 2024

Virginia General Assembly
1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

To the Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

My name is Dr. Elie Bracy, III, and I serve as the division superintendent for Portsmouth Public Schools. I am writing this letter in support of *House Bill 1437 Sales tax; school construction*.

This bill, which was introduced by Delegate Cliff Hayes, would add the City of Portsmouth to the list of localities that would be allowed to levy an additional one percent of local sales tax specifically to fund the construction and/or renovation of its schools.

As with most school divisions in the Commonwealth, in Portsmouth Public Schools, we are reliant upon our local government to fund our needs and operations. However, in Portsmouth, taxing capabilities are greatly limited due to roughly 40 percent of our land being owned and operated by the state or federal government. This includes the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and the Fifth Coast Guard District based in Portsmouth.

Consequently, as school improvement needs continue to compound, we are unsuccessful in getting the funds necessary to meet the very present and real infrastructure demands of our division's school buildings. If passed, this bill will help identify and isolate a funding source for our school division that can be dedicated to addressing these vital needs.

If any member has specific questions about how we would benefit from this funding, I am available to talk through our current Capital Improvement Program plan as well as a 2018 facility study that outlines building needs.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter as well as your consideration of House Bill 1437.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elie Bracy III
Division Superintendent, Portsmouth Public Schools