



Dear Delegate Jones, Delegate Chang, and Delegate Barnes,

I am writing to you today, as Head of School at New Village Academy, to ask you for your support of SB0892 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on February 21st. I am writing to share why this bill is essentially to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide, and at their best, providing an incubator for innovation and an option for families that need something different but cannot afford to pay tuition. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much-needed funding SB0892 would supply.

Traditional public schools utilize separate capital funding and general funds from sources that are not available to public charter schools to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0892 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0892 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets thoughtful parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

As Delegate Jones knows, New Village Academy has struggled to fund its own facility. While Annapolis has an urgent need for alternatives to traditional public high school, the shortage and expense of Annapolis area real estate have made launching a small school like New Village Academy, for students who need more individualized learning, especially challenging. The MSDE decision not to apply for Federal Charter School Grant funding caused delays that have created additional obstacles for our start-up finances. This bill would be a game-changer for New Village Academy.

Our model is cost-effective, innovative, and replicable. At full enrollment of 250 students, we will be able to operate at 85% of the per-pupil cost of traditional high school, while meeting student needs more effectively. Our AACPS Superintendent and Board of Education are highly supportive and hopeful that our model might be replicated in other areas of the county. We will serve a high-need population that, by Dr. Bedell's own admission, our county schools have not served well. It is in everyone's interest - students and families, AACPS, youth organizations, and local government - to enable schools like New Village Academy to be successful by fully funding them - with facility as well as operational budgets.

We look forward to the hearing on February 21st and your support of SB0892, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment.

Thank you,

Romey Pittman

Head of School

New Village Academy

www.NewVillageAcademy.org

www.marylandcharters.org