



# CHESAPEAKE LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION

Lighting The Way For Excellence in Education!

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Written Testimony for SB0892

As the Director of Information Technology at the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to advancing educational opportunities through charter schools in Maryland, I am writing to express our wholehearted support for Senate Bill 0892 (SB0892). This crucial piece of legislation seeks to address a longstanding disparity in the funding and maintenance of facilities that are essential to the operation and success of public charter schools in our state.

In the realm of IT, we are acutely aware of the vital role that modern, well-maintained facilities play in creating environments conducive to learning and innovation. The digital age demands that students have access to reliable technology and infrastructure that supports their educational journey. However, the reality for many charter schools is a struggle to provide these necessities due to limited access to capital funding and general funds, which are readily available to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for their facilities, operations, and maintenance.

SB0892 proposes an equitable solution by establishing a fund managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), which would allow public charter schools to apply for up to \$2,000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This initiative does not detract from the Blueprint formula or the resources allocated to other public school students, as it is designed to be funded from the State's General Fund. Moreover, it ensures that Blueprint dollars are invested directly into the classroom—enhancing the learning experience—rather than being diverted to cover the costs of facility maintenance and repairs.

The importance of this bill cannot be overstated. A safe, welcoming, and adequately equipped school building is not just a backdrop for education; it is a critical component that impacts the quality of teaching and learning. Current conditions force charter schools to allocate a significant portion of their budget to facilities, detracting from their ability to invest in educational technologies and resources that can significantly enhance the learning experience. This is not just an issue of fiscal management; it is a question of equity and access to quality education for all students, regardless of the type of public school they attend.

Our support for SB0892 is rooted in the belief that all students deserve to be educated in environments that reflect the importance of their learning journey. For too long, charter school students and teachers have had to make do with older, often inadequate facilities, simply because of the type of public school they are part of. This bill represents an opportunity to change that narrative and ensure that charter schools can provide the same level of support and resources as their counterparts in traditional public schools.

As we mark over two decades of public charter schools in Maryland, the time has come to address the inequities in facility funding and support. SB0892 is a step in the right direction, setting strong parameters for spending accountability and transparency, and ensuring that our students and teachers have the facilities they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Jason Karabulut  
Director of IT  
Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation