



CHESAPEAKE LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION

Lighting The Way For Excellence in Education!

6151 Chevy Chase Drive Laurel, MD 20707 P: (301) 776-2300 F: (240) 547-2571



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Written Testimony for SB0892

I am writing to you as the Director of Operations for the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation (CLF), a role that has allowed me to engage deeply with the operational and educational facets of our charter schools across Maryland. My journey in education, which began in 1996, has been diverse and enriching, spanning multiple countries and educational systems. With a background in Mathematics, Information Technology (IT), Business Administration, and school leadership, I have been privileged to support the mission of CLF in fostering the next generation of STEM innovators.

At CLF, we are dedicated to providing an environment that not only supports but enhances the learning experiences of our students. However, a significant challenge we face in this endeavor is the disparity in funding for our facilities. Unlike Local Education Agencies (LEAs), which can access capital funding and general funds from various sources to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance, public charter schools like ours are at a disadvantage. This inequity has compelled us to allocate a considerable portion of our budget—funds that could otherwise be directed toward educational programs—toward the maintenance and improvement of our facilities.

Senate Bill 0892 (SB0892) represents a pivotal opportunity to address this longstanding issue. By establishing a fund managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), SB0892 would enable public charter schools to apply for up to \$2,000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. Importantly, this initiative would not impact the Blueprint formula or detract from the resources allocated to other public school students, as it is designed to be funded from the State's General Fund.

The significance of SB0892 extends beyond fiscal considerations. It is about ensuring that all public school students, irrespective of the school they attend, have access to safe, welcoming, and adequately equipped learning environments. The current situation, where charter schools must navigate facilities challenges with limited resources, is unsustainable. It not only affects the quality of education we can provide but also places unnecessary stress on our teachers and limits the educational opportunities available to our students.

I urge you to support SB0892, not only on behalf of the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation but on behalf of the larger charter school community across the state, including more than 24,000 families and 53 schools in eight districts. Your support for this bill will affirm our collective commitment to providing all students in Maryland with the educational opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for considering our support for this critical legislation. We look forward to the positive impact SB0892 will have on our schools and, most importantly, on our students.

Sincerely,

Eric Derin

Director, CLF Operations & Enrichment

Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation