

Charter School Building Funding.pdf

Uploaded by: Aimee Meier

Position: FAV

Dear Senators,

As the parents of students at Frederick Classical Charter, I ask for your consideration and support of SB0892 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment, sponsored by Senator McCray.

Today I'm reaching out to you, not just on behalf of our family, but on behalf of the 24,000 students statewide who are taught in charter schools.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint operating dollars (around 17-20%) to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools and LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to balance the inequities that public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

Thank you,
Aimee Meier
Frederick County

Lexi's Testimony for SB892_HB1061 - Written Versio

Uploaded by: Alexandria Hemingway

Position: FAV

Lexi's Testimony - Supporting SB892/HB1061

Alexandria Hemingway
2206 Nottoway Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Hello Everyone.

My name is Alexandria Hemingway. I am 9 years old, and I'm in 3rd Grade at Chesapeake Science Point Elementary School in Hanover, Maryland.

I support this bill because I believe in making our school the best place it can be for learning and growing.

I love my school because all of the teachers are super nice to all of the kids in my school. My favorite subject is science. And I love having recess and lunch. And sometimes at the end of the day I have clubs. My favorite club is the entrepreneur club.

When I grow up I want to be a surgeon, and my school is giving me a strong foundation to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. And that's why I love my school.

I know that with a little more help, like this bill provides, that my school could be even better for me and students like me across the state.

Thank you for supporting this bill.

Alexandria

SES Letterhead-Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Alisha Yocum

Position: FAV

Sabillasville Environmental School

Ms. Sheena Talley
Principal

Ms. Ianna Little
Admin. Secretary



Ms. Marilyn Greenfield
Guidance Counselor

16210B Sabillasville Road
Sabillasville, Md 21780
240 236-6000

February 20, 2024

Dear Budget and Tax Committee,

My name is Alisha Yocum and I am the President of the Board of Directors for Sabillasville Environmental School - A Classical Charter. We are a rural charter school located in the northern part of Frederick County that provides education to grades K-7 currently with plans to add 8th grade next year. Our school focuses on agriculture and environmental science.

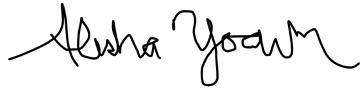
Today, I am writing to you in support of the bill that is being submitted before you on February 21. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much-needed funding SB0892 would supply. As a small school with currently only 185 students these funds would make a huge impact on our budget. Just like most charter schools in the state, our school spends around 17% of its budget on maintenance and repairs to our facility. Our current building is over 50 years old and needs major updates to the HVAC system, a new roof, and new blacktop for our parking lot, which all have to be paid out of our PPA funding unless you support this bill. Imagine if instead of using our PPA funding for these repairs we could put that money back in the classroom! What a difference it would make for not only our students at SES, but the thousands of public charter school students across the state.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, 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.

Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't

equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alisha Yocum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alisha Yocum
President, Board of Directors

Allison Rizzo.pdf

Uploaded by: Allison Rizzo

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Guzzone and members of the Senate Budget & Tax Committee,

Thank you for considering SB0892 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund. Please vote in favor of this legislation – it is critical to close the significant gap that has existed in the law for the past 20 years. Over 24,000 children across the state are receiving a public education that is significantly under-funded compared to their traditional school peers. Public charter schools must deliver a better-than-average education, and they already do it on 20% less than traditional schools. Imagine what more they can do with Maryland taxpayer’s investment if they are offered a chance to participate in fair and equitable facility funding, too.

My children are enrolled in three public schools, two of them are public charter schools. We send our children to different schools so that they can each receive the unique education that best suits their unique learning styles and personalities. It is a privilege that Frederick County provides these options to families and that we “won the lottery” to be able to enroll. However, we ask that this choice be funded the same – in the spirit of the charter school law – so that our children can attend public charter schools that are as well funded as our neighborhood public school.

Please support SB0892.

Sincerely,

Allison Rizzo

Frederick, Maryland

2024 SB0892Testimony_CPCS_Funya.pdf

Uploaded by: Angela Funya

Position: FAV



Ms. Angela Funya Charter Director / **Ms. Sandy Imbriale** Education Director
Ms. Jill Rayford / **Ms. Jennifer Surber** Academic Deans

February 21, 2024
Written Testimony for SB0892

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of SB0892. My name is Angela Funya and I am the Charter Director for Chesapeake Public Charter School (also known as CPCS) in St. Mary's County. CPCS is a K-8 charter school in Lexington Park, Maryland. I've helped to open and manage this public school of choice for the last 20 years. I've seen thousands of children pass through the doors of our school over that time. Children from every district and every zip code in St. Mary's County come to school on Great Mills Road every day to a facility that is owned and operated by the Chesapeake Charter School Alliance (CCSA). From our start in 2007 of 160 children to the present with 540 students, 329 families, and 65 educators, our little school has provided the residents of St. Mary's with a choice pathway that has only served to augment one of the most people driven public school systems I've ever worked in. Our small class sizes and focus on education through the lens of the arts and the environment has provided a community for children who might need a different way to learn. Our wait list exceeds 450 potential students.

The St. Mary's County Public School System can utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources to support their facilities, mortgage, operations, & maintenance. These same funds are not available to the Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, the non-profit that owns our building and operates our school. To manage our facility, CCSA needs to utilize 12% of our per pupil operating funds which could be better served supporting the exceptional alternative educational programming it offers to our students. 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, and potentially supported by the Federal CSP dollars. Instead, SB0892 will allow Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong 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.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Charter school teachers are public school teachers and deserve to teach and have the resources needed just like any other public school. Not providing public charter schools with funds to operate their facilities isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

We have had more than 20 years of public charter schools in Maryland. It is time we get to work funding their public school facilities. We look forward to the vote today and your support of SB0892.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at the information below. Please pass SB0892.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AFunya".

Chesapeake Public Charter School Charter Director
agfunya@smcps.org

SB0892 (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Levitsky

Position: FAV

Anne Levitsky
2518 Old Coach Ct.
Frederick, MD 21702
anneslevitsky@gmail.com
304-261-8961
February 20, 2024

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB0892 - Funding for Public Charter School Facilities

Dear Senator McCray,

I am writing in support of SB0892. I have a child who attends Frederick Charter School in Frederick MD. Our school, like any other public school in Maryland, deserves to have our facility funded. Since the school was founded over 10 years ago, we have been housed in a business park. While the staff work hard every day to make it a warm and inviting educational environment, it is difficult when our space is severely limited and not designed with the needs of a school in mind. Our back parking lot is the only outdoor space we have for a playground, so our scholars outdoor time is limited. Because we don't have our facility funded, we have to save our money with the hope that one day we will be able to purchase our own building. With rapidly increasing property values in Frederick County, this goal seems further and further out of reach. While we save and plan, our scholars, who have some of the highest test scores in the county in both elementary and middle school, go without.

Frederick Classical Charter School has one of the most culturally diverse student populations in the county. Unfortunately, we have no paid librarian, we are lacking computers, texts, hands on materials, additional staff needed to support our students and we have are not able to provide any student transportation. If we had the funds to help provide a facility, we could use the money we have been saving, to give our scholars not only more resources within the school, but we could provide more Frederick County students the opportunity to have access to our school.

As a parent, I urge you to consider the long-term impact of supporting SB0892. By providing facilities funding for public charter schools, we invest in the future of our children and empower educators to continue delivering quality education. Let us bridge the funding gap and ensure that every child, regardless of the type of public school they attend, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I implore you to stand with parents, students, and educators in supporting SB0892, a bill that will make a profound difference in the lives of countless children across our state.

Sincerely,

Anne Levitsky

CLF STEM-Outreach Letter in Support of SB 0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashish Vadalia

Position: FAV



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



February 21, 2024

Written Testimony for SB0892

As the STEM and Outreach Manager at the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation, a dedicated non-profit charter school operator in Maryland, I am reaching out to express our unwavering support for Senate Bill 0892 (SB0892), a critical piece of legislation poised to transform the landscape of capital funding for facilities within our public charter schools. Our role within the foundation places us at the intersection of educational programming and community engagement, offering us a unique perspective on the direct impact that adequate, safe, and technologically equipped facilities have on the quality of STEM education and overall student success.

For over two decades, CLF public charter schools have been innovative leaders in providing specialized educational opportunities, particularly in STEM fields. Yet, despite our commitment to excellence and innovation, charter schools need help funding the facilities that house our vibrant learning communities. 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 have been primarily left to navigate these financial burdens with limited resources.

SB0892 proposes an equitable solution to this challenge by establishing a fund managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC). This fund would enable public charter schools to apply for up to \$2,000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses, ensuring that our students can learn in environments that are not only safe and welcoming but also conducive to the high demands of modern STEM education. Importantly, this funding mechanism is designed to complement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, allowing Blueprint dollars to be more effectively allocated towards enhancing instructional quality rather than covering the costs associated with facility maintenance and operations.

The provision of SB0892 is independent of the resources available to other public school students. Instead, it offers a targeted approach to address the disparities in facilities funding, grounded in principles of accountability, transparency, and fiscal responsibility. By enabling public charter schools to access state general funds for facilities, we can ensure that every dollar allocated to education directly benefits the learning experience of our students, particularly in critical areas like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Charter school students are public school students, deserving of every opportunity to thrive in environments that stimulate curiosity, foster innovation, and prepare them for the challenges of the future. However, the current inequity in facilities funding often places our students and teachers at a disadvantage, compelling us to divert essential resources away from educational programs towards maintaining aging and inadequate buildings. This is not just a matter of fiscal policy; it is a question of equity, justice, and our collective commitment to the future of education in Maryland.

As we stand on the brink of a historic decision, I urge you to support SB0892, not only as a legislative measure but as a statement of our shared values and aspirations for the education of our children. Thank you for considering our support for SB0892.

Sincerely,

Ashish Vadalia
STEM and Outreach Manager, Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation

house bill testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Claudia Chang

Position: FAV

My name is Claudia Chang. My children attend Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter School – a Maryland public Charter School.

I have had a student in the CSP community for 12 years and we will be there for 10 more years. I have seen lots of change but no great stride in MD charter laws. They are NOT in favor of our students. YOU can change that.

Right now there is approximately \$2k per student that goes to pay for our facilities and operation costs just To keep the lights on and pay rent - YOU can help offset that.

This is money that isn't in the classroom that OUR CHILDREN DESERVE!

Please support SB 0892 – School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment.

Imagine the additional opportunities that would be available to Maryland Public School students when this bill is passed. Education should be one of the highest priorities in our state.

Will you please support this bill so it can be a priority? Our children are relying on YOU!

Support of SB0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Cortney Krauss

Position: FAV

As a parent of two scholars and member of the Board of Trustees at Frederick Classical Charter School, I thank you Senator McCray for introducing SB0892 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment.

This bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public-school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The critical funding provided through SB0892 will directly benefit public charter school students and teachers who have so far never been provided equitable funding in Maryland. It will also be a benefit to school districts and an investment in the communities where charter schools operate.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance. SB0892 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for reimbursement up to \$2000 per pupil annually for actual eligible facilities-related expenses. It also provides a mechanism for federal funding to flow to Maryland, which cannot occur without the establishment of this fund. This commensurate investment in education does not impact the Blueprint formula nor 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 operating dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong 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.

Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public-school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter schoolteachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or support? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint operating dollars (around 17-20%) to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools and LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to balance the inequities that public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

Public charter schools have demonstrated proven results in Maryland for the past 20 years - they are required to maintain above average performance standards for student outcomes. It is about time we get to work funding these public-school facilities so that operating dollars can be spent where they were intended - on teachers, curriculum, and programming for students. I look forward to the Budget & Tax hearing on February 21st and your support of SB0892, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only my family, but the larger charter school community across the state - more than 24,000 students, 53 schools in eight districts - in need of your help here again to make Maryland schools world-class.

Thank you,
Cortney Krauss
City of Frederick/Frederick County

Bill SB0892 for Debbie Nnameka.pdf

Uploaded by: Debbie Nnameka

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Paul D. Corderman,

As the Vice President of the Board of Trustees, FCCS Inc. at Frederick Classical Charter School, I ask for your consideration and support of SB0892 School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment, sponsored by Senator McCray.

This bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The critical funding provided through SB0892 will directly benefit public charter school students and teachers who have so far never been provided equitable funding in Maryland. It will also be a benefit to school districts and an investment in the communities where charter schools operate.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance. SB0892 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for reimbursement up to \$2000 per pupil annually for actual eligible facilities-related expenses. It also provides a mechanism for federal funding to flow to Maryland, which cannot occur without establishment of this fund. This commensurate investment in education does not impact the Blueprint formula nor 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 operating dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong 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.

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Public charter schools have demonstrated proven results in Maryland for the past 20 years – they are required to maintain above average performance standards for student outcomes. It is about time we get to work funding these public school facilities so that operating dollars can be spent where they were intended – on teachers, curriculum, and programming for students. I look forward to the Budget & Tax hearing on February 21st and your support of SB0892, School Construction – Public Charter School

Facility Fund – Establishment. Please know that it is not only my family, but the larger charter school community across the state – more than 24,000 students, 53 schools in eight districts – in need of your help here again to make Maryland schools world-class.

I would also like to take a moment to give special thanks to Senator Cory. V. McCray for sponsoring this bill. We are deeply appreciative of all your efforts.

Thank you,

Debbie Nnameka

Frederick County.

Lexi's Testimony for SB892_HB1061 - Written Versio

Uploaded by: Deborah Hemingway

Position: FAV

Lexi's Testimony - Supporting SB892/HB1061

Alexandria Hemingway
2206 Nottoway Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Hello Everyone.

My name is Alexandria Hemingway. I am 9 years old, and I'm in 3rd Grade at Chesapeake Science Point Elementary School in Hanover, Maryland.

I support this bill because I believe in making our school the best place it can be for learning and growing.

I love my school because all of the teachers are super nice to all of the kids in my school. My favorite subject is science. And I love having recess and lunch. And sometimes at the end of the day I have clubs. My favorite club is the entrepreneur club.

When I grow up I want to be a surgeon, and my school is giving me a strong foundation to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. And that's why I love my school.

I know that with a little more help, like this bill provides, that my school could be even better for me and students like me across the state.

Thank you for supporting this bill.

Alexandria

SB892 - Deborah's Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Deborah Hemingway

Position: FAV

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 892: School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment

February 21, 2024

Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

My name is Deborah Hemingway, and I am the founder and Managing Partner of Ecphora Capital, an emerging venture firm dedicated to supporting medical device companies in Maryland. I am an alumna of the University of Maryland College Park, where I earned a PhD in Biophysics. I have been a proud resident of Anne Arundel County for many years, deeply invested in the well-being of our community. Most importantly, I am a mother to four incredible children, with my eldest, Alexandria, joining me in this endeavor today.

My three oldest children, including Alexandria, are currently attending Chesapeake Science Point Elementary School, a charter school with a commendable focus on STEM education. My youngest is eager to attend as well after he turns five next year. This institution's inaugural year has already showcased its potential to significantly impact our children's futures positively. Despite the financial constraints it faces, the school's ability to provide an exemplary educational experience is nothing short of remarkable.

However, the fiscal challenges imposed on such institutions cannot be overlooked. The restricted budget has undoubtedly limited what the school can achieve. Senate Bill 892 presents a beacon of hope in this context. By offering additional support, this bill not only promises to enhance the learning environment but also secures the future of schools like Chesapeake Science Point Elementary, ensuring they continue to flourish and serve future generations.

I support this bill, not just as a business leader or an academic, but as a parent who sees the boundless potential in all of our children. I support Senate Bill 892 because I believe in investing in our next generation. I believe in nurturing their abilities, in fostering a love for learning, and in preparing them for a future that is bright and filled with opportunities. This bill aligns with those beliefs, offering a pathway to a stronger, brighter, more resilient Maryland.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact of your decision on the children of Maryland and on the educational landscape of our state. Your support for Senate Bill 892 will be a testament to your commitment to our children's future and the prosperity of Maryland.

Thank you for your favorable support.

Sincerely,



Deborah Hemingway, PhD
Founder and Managing Partner, Ecphora Capital
Alumna, University of Maryland, College Park
Resident, Anne Arundel County
Mother and Advocate for STEM Education

CLF Operations-Outreach Letter in Support of SB 08

Uploaded by: Erkan Derin

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION

Lighting The Way For Excellence in Education!

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February 21, 2024

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

GCowgill SB0892 support letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Gabrielle Cowgill

Position: FAV

Gabrielle Cowgill
11915 Wonder Court
Monrovia, MD 21770
glcowgill25@gmail.com
(301) 363-8802

February 20, 2024

RE: Written Testimony in Support of SB0892 – Funding for Public Charter School Facilities

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of SB0892. I am writing to you as a concerned parent and advocate for the students, teachers, and families of public charter schools, specifically in support of Senate Bill SB0892. My name is Gabrielle Cowgill, and my child is a student at Frederick Classical Charter School in Maryland.

Frederick Classical Charter School, despite being recognized as the #1 charter school for elementary and #2 for middle school in the state, faces a significant challenge that hampers its ability to provide the best possible education for its students – the lack of facilities funding. As a parent, I have witnessed the detrimental impacts this funding shortfall has had on the learning environment, the dedicated teachers, and the families as a whole.

It is crucial to acknowledge that public charter schools are an integral part of our public education system, serving diverse communities and providing innovative educational options for our children. However, the current disparity in funding for facilities places an unfair burden on these schools and compromises the quality of education they can offer.

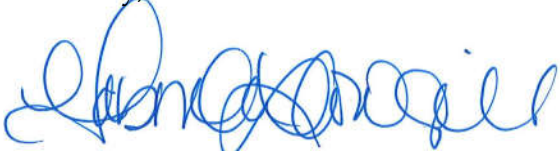
SB0892 represents a vital step towards rectifying this issue by allocating much-needed funds for public charter school facilities. By supporting this bill, we acknowledge that public charter schools, like Frederick Classical Charter School, are not just alternative institutions; they are an essential component of our educational landscape. The lack of facilities funding not only undermines the potential for academic excellence but also adversely affects the well-being of students, their families, and the dedicated educators who strive to make a difference.

Frederick Classical Charter School's exceptional rankings are a testament to the hard work and commitment of its teachers, administrators, and students. Imagine the remarkable achievements our schools could attain with adequate facilities funding. Our children deserve an environment that fosters learning, creativity, and growth, and SB0892 is a crucial step in ensuring they have access to the resources they need.

As a parent, I urge you to consider the long-term impact of supporting SB0892. By providing facilities funding for public charter schools, we invest in the future of our children and empower educators to continue delivering quality education. Let us bridge the funding gap and ensure that every child, regardless of the type of public school they attend, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I implore you to stand with parents, students, and educators in supporting SB0892, a bill that will make a profound difference in the lives of countless children across our state.

Sincerely,



Gabrielle Cowgill

Support of Senate Bill 892.pdf

Uploaded by: Helen Chang

Position: FAV

February 19, 2024

Senate Budget and Tax Committee

I am the grandmother of 3 children who currently attend Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter School (CSP and CSPES) in Hanover Maryland. They are in 2^{ed}, 7th and 11th Grade. I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 892 named "Public Charter School Facilities Fund"

CSP has been a part of our family since my son's oldest was accepted in the lottery many years ago. (she graduated in 2017). I have seen the Charter Operator; Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation also start Chesapeake Math and IT Academy North (CMIT North) in Laurel and Chesapeake Math and IT Academy (CMIT South) in Upper Marlboro. This past year our Middle/High CSP received a 5-star rating and both CMIT schools received a 4-star rating. They are excellent schools that all in the state should be proud to support for their children, and the education that they receive.

Yet proving all the necessary things needed for an excellent school is expensive. As you know, Charter schools do receive public money, but the cost of the facilities and utilities are born within the budget of money received per pupil. In the case of CPS (Middle/High) the small building houses only 500 students yet it spends over 1 million a year in rent. Think what that money could do if it was directed to more educational opportunities and equipment. Actually, the size of the school building is a major limiting factor to the number of slots available in the lottery to enter CSP.

This bill would provide the Charter School the assistance with funds for the facilities the schools are housed in. I am hoping that you will support the passage of this bill as it will benefit not only my grandchildren but all the children of Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration.

Helen M. Chang
6839 Damsel Ct
Greenbelt, MD

20240220 Living Classrooms SB0892 Written Testimon

Uploaded by: James Bond

Position: FAV

February 21, 2024



Written Testimony for SB0892 on behalf of Living Classrooms Foundation

Chairpersons and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 0892 in my capacity as the President and CEO of the Living Classrooms Foundation, a non-profit organization that operates the Crossroads Public Charter Middle School in Baltimore, Maryland.

On behalf of our students and families at Crossroads – now and in the future, I urge you to vote in favor of SB0892. Currently, public charter schools in Maryland seeking to support their facilities, operations & maintenance do not have access to the same capital funding and general funding from other sources as LEAs. SB0892 seeks to correct this disparity by establishing 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.

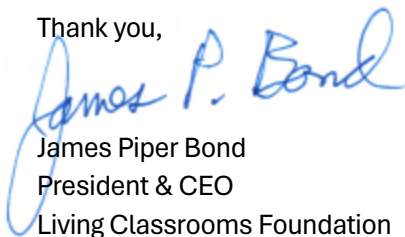
ALL public-school students - including our public charter school students at Crossroads – deserve to learn and grow in safe, healthy, and welcoming school buildings and facilities. The funding in SB0892 does not take funding away from other public-school students or impact the Blueprint Formula because the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0892 would allow public charter schools like Crossroads to spend our allocated Blueprint dollars directly on learning in and out of the classroom instead of on our school facility. In addition, SB0892 has strong parameters to ensure transparency and accountability that includes standard bond bill language regarding repayment in the event of a sale or closure.

Families in Maryland deserve more equity and access in the educational choices available for their children. Our families should not have to choose between a school that has the most appropriate culture or learning style for their student and one that has adequate facilities. Our students and families deserve both. SB0892 works to close the inequities in facilities funding that negatively impact our public charter school students and families – over 24,000 families - every day.

As one of the 53 public charter schools in 8 districts of Maryland, we are very much looking forward to the vote today to correct this disparity in funding and we very much appreciate your support of SB0892.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or comments.

Thank you,



James Piper Bond
President & CEO
Living Classrooms Foundation

CLF IT Letter in Support of SB 0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Jason Karabulut

Position: FAV



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



February 21, 2024

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

Advocating for SB 892 and HB 1061.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Smith

Position: FAV

Kenley Smith
Kindergarten
Chesapeake Science Point Elementary
2/20/24

Pamela Beidle
Maryland State Senator
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Ms. Beidle,

Hello! My name is Kenley, and I'm a Kindergartener at Chesapeake Science Point Elementary School in Hanover, Maryland. I am writing to you today because I believe in making our schools the best places they can be for learning and growing.

I learned about Senate Bill 892 and House Bill 1061, which are about creating a special fund called the Public Charter School Facility Fund. This fund would help public charter schools like mine have the money they need for essential things related to facilities rent/mortgage and building repairs. It's really important for schools to have good buildings and safe classrooms so that students like me can focus on learning new things and not worry about our school falling apart. This fund would also allow for charter schools to have an equitable approach to education in terms of budgets as 15-20% of the school's operational budget would no longer be needed for capital costs.

I love my school because my teachers are great, and I get to learn a lot of interesting things. But I know that with a little help, it could be even better for everyone who goes here now and will in the future. By supporting Senate Bill 892 and House Bill 1061, you would be helping not just me, but lots of kids all over Maryland have a better place to learn.

My mom is a former teacher and still is in the field of education. In her work, she visits multiple schools every day and knows the role the environment plays in students' education. It is critical that students are in a healthy building and in order to maintain that environment, budget funds are necessary. When those funds have to be diverted to the building and maintenance, students lose the other opportunities that make their educational experience meaningful and effective.

We all deserve to have schools that are safe, fun, and exciting places to be every day. With your help, we can make sure that every charter school in Maryland gets to be the best it can be.

Thank you very much for reading my letter. I hope you can support these bills to make our schools better places to learn and grow. We're counting on you to help make a difference for all of us students in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Kenley Smith
Kindergarten
Chesapeake Science Point Elementary School

Written Testimony in support of SB0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Constant

Position: FAV

Written Testimony in Support of SB0892 – Funding for Public Charter School Facilities

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee members,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees for Frederick Classical Charter School to express our fervent support for Senate Bill SB0892. This critical legislation addresses the pressing issue of facilities funding for public charter schools, a matter that significantly impacts the ability of schools like ours to provide a high-quality education.

Frederick Classical Charter School has consistently demonstrated academic excellence despite facing budgeting challenges due to a lower per pupil allocation compared to traditional public schools. As the Treasurer, I am acutely aware of the strain this places on our ability to maintain and improve our facilities adequately.

The current reality forces us to divert valuable resources and energy towards identifying creative ways to fundraise for facilities. While we are committed to providing the best possible educational experience for our students, these efforts should ideally be channeled into enhancing classroom experiences rather than funding bricks and mortar. SB0892 presents an opportunity to alleviate this financial burden and redirect our focus to what truly matters – investing in the academic success and well-being of our students.

As a Treasurer, I understand the delicate balance of managing budgets and allocating resources effectively. SB0892 not only addresses the immediate need for facilities funding but also recognizes the long-term impact on the quality of education we can deliver. By supporting this bill, you are not only endorsing financial relief for public charter schools but also endorsing a strategic investment in the future of our children.

It is crucial to emphasize that the essence of our efforts should be concentrated on the classroom, not on the struggle to secure funding for facilities. Public charter schools, like Frederick Classical Charter School, play a vital role in our educational system, and their success depends on equitable access to resources.

I urge you to consider the impact of SB0892 from a financial perspective, recognizing the importance of relieving the budgetary constraints that hinder our ability to provide the best possible education for our students. By supporting this bill, you contribute to the enhancement of educational opportunities and outcomes for countless students who rely on public charter schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I implore you to stand with us, recognizing the importance of funding public charter school facilities through SB0892 and ensuring that our resources are directed towards nurturing the minds of our students.

Sincerely,

Jessica Constant
Treasurer, Board of Trustees
Frederick Classical Charter School

Facilites funding support CCSA.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Emerson

Position: FAV



Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, LTD (CCSA)
20945 Great Mills Road, Suite 501
Lexington Park, MD 20653
Phone (301) 863-9585
Fax (301) 863-9586
schools.smcps.org/cpcs/alliance

Dear Senator McCray and Colleagues;

I am writing to you today to advocate for facility funding for Maryland Charter Schools, and specifically, the Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS) in St. Mary's County, through a positive endorsement of a bill funding facilities support for Maryland Public Charter Schools. I write as Board Chair of the Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, a non-profit organization that oversees the charter agreement for CPCS and owns the facilities that are used by CPCS. Additionally, I am a father of two students in the school - grades 5 and 7, and have fully come to love the school and the opportunity provided by this **school of choice** in St. Mary's County.

CPCS is a K-8 school that provides a whole child approach to educating 540 children from across our entire county. CPCS has supported thousands of families and children throughout St. Mary's, since it was founded in 2007, and currently has a waitlist of over 450 children. Our academic and social emotional program success has served as a model for traditional public schools in our district, and our reciprocal relationship with the local board of education demonstrates how impactful a partnership between charters and traditional schools can be. We are truly a model that deserves to be replicated statewide.

St. Mary's County families want to be a part of what CPCS provides. Through project-based learning, environmental stewardship, and arts integration, students work together to solve real world problems and strive to contribute meaningful improvements to our local community. CPCS families are ardent supporters of the school and its mission and have volunteered over 4,020 hours in the past year alone to support its mission. CPCS students learn how to be good stewards of our community as CPCS is a sustainable Green School and has an active CPCS CARES program that supports families in need. By integrating science and art, students expand their mindset and become lifelong learners. The school offers a unique K-8 model and provides opportunities for students of varying ages to work together, learning from one another as they celebrate successes each week in our Community Gathering and participate in multi-grade "buddy" programs.

Many visitors have shared their first impression of CPCS as being one of a welcoming community. They see CPCS students coming to school excited to learn and share their knowledge with others. Whether making reef balls to restore our local oyster bars, sewing and donating cat blankets to local shelters, becoming changemakers in a "wax museum" or singing at the St. Mary's River Watershed's Riverfest, CPCS students work together to make St. Mary's County a better place for all community members.

Recently, Maryland law, known as the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), has put CPCS and other small schools at risk of losing critical funding. This would prevent CPCS from continuing to provide these opportunities for St. Mary's County Public School children. Our current funding formula provides CPCS with 98% of our per pupil allocation from SMCPS, with 2% remaining at the district level for overhead costs. CPCS does not receive revenue to assist with facilities costs as dictated by the Maryland Charter School law. Currently, CPCS spends 12% of its operating budget on facilities including the building mortgage, building maintenance, cleaning services, snow removal, and utilities. 81% of the operating funds are allocated to salaries. With the updated funding structure from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, CPCS would not have sufficient funds to meet those needs and continue the amazing learning opportunities it offers to students across the county.

We all know that one of the most important investments our community can make is in our children. According to the Brookings Institution "investment in community schools can yield important economic outcomes for both individuals

and communities.”¹ and “the community schools approach to family engagement helps cultivate leadership and relationships that, in turn, can facilitate greater civic involvement.”¹ This is what we want for St. Mary’s County.

I implore you to support the charter school facilities bill, establishing the Public Charter School Facility Fund. **As Blueprint cripples the ability for community based schools, such as CPCS, to provide critical skills for our children, this funding would be instrumental in allowing us to continue our mission while being commensurately funded.** Show your support for our children, our choices, and our community. Support this bill.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KEVIN EMERSON', written over a horizontal line.

Kevin Emerson

Chair, Chesapeake Charter School Alliance

Professor of Biology, St. Mary’s College of Maryland

2024 SB0892Testimony MAPCS.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: McKenzie Allen

Position: FAV



February 21, 2024

Written Testimony for SB0892

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of SB0892. My name is McKenzie Allen and I am the executive director of the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools (also known as MAPCS). MAPCS is a nonprofit organization of charter school operators from across the state. We represent over 24,000 students in 53 schools over eight districts.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, 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, SB08926 will allow Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong 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.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

We have had more than 20 years of public charter schools in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding their public school facilities. We look forward to the vote today and your support of SB0892. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 53 schools in eight districts standing behind you.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at the information below. Please pass SB0892.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'McKenzie Allen', written in a cursive style.

McKenzie Allen

Executive Director, Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools

mckenzie@mdcharters.org

410.919.9678 EXT 1

www.marylandcharters.org

Written Testimony for SB0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Hanson

Position: FAV

February 21, 2024

Written Testimony for SB0892

I express my gratitude to the Chairpersons and Committee Members for giving me this chance to testify in support of SB0892. My name is Rachel Hanson. I am writing on behalf of Frederick Classical Charter School about the urgent need for facility funding. As a parent and active member of the Frederick Classical Charter School community, I have witnessed the impact of a lack of facility funding on our school and students. Maryland Charter Schools are public schools and should, therefore, be afforded the same resources and support as traditional public schools. In recent years, our school has seen a significant increase in enrollment due to its reputation for providing a high-quality education and innovative teaching methods. However, our current facilities are inadequate to accommodate this growing demand. Frederick Classical Charter School is a beacon of excellence in our community and statewide, providing our students with a rigorous and well-rounded classical education. Our committed faculty and staff put out endless effort to foster an atmosphere where students can intellectually and morally thrive. The analysis presented by my predecessors and my observations reveal how the daily conduct inside our classrooms funds the larger environment of our institution. Our school has won multiple awards and recognitions for its hardworking faculty, staff, and students, and it is currently the top charter school in our state.

However, despite our successes, we face significant challenges due to inadequate facility funding. Our school's facility is in dire need of upgrades and expansion. The current state of Frederick Classical Charter School's facility highlights the urgent need for immediate attention and funding. The outdated, limited spacing learning facilities and growing community hinder the teaching and learning process and create an atmosphere of unfairness and discomfort for our students. The impact of the lack of facility funding extends beyond mere physical deficiencies. It affects the overall learning environment and the well-being of our students. A conducive and safe learning environment is essential for the holistic development of our students, not just academically but also as individuals. The current conditions not only hamper academic progress but also instill a sense of unease and insecurity in the minds of our students. As a result, these conditions also deter prospective parents from considering our school for their children's education.

The Committee must understand the urgency at Frederick Classical Charter School. By supporting the SB0892 bill for facility funding, the committee would provide the necessary resources to address the current deficiencies for our school and other schools facing similar challenges. The lack of facility funding is not just a financial concern; it directly impacts our students' future and the academic institution's reputation. The committee's support and allocation of necessary funding will rectify the immediate physical deficiencies and signify a commitment to providing our students with a conducive and safe learning environment.

Thank you once again for the opportunity. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at the information below. Please pass SB0892.

Thank you,

Rachel Hanson (Parent)
addorachel@hotmail.com
301.728.8666

New Vilage Academy SB0892 Advocacy Delegates.pdf

Uploaded by: Romey Pittman

Position: FAV



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

New Village SB0892 Advocacy letter-Elfreth.pdf

Uploaded by: Romey Pittman

Position: FAV



Dear Senator Elfreth,

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 a member 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 you know, 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

SB0892 Written Testimony Savona Rizzo.pdf

Uploaded by: Savona Rizzo

Position: FAV

I am Savona Rizzo, a current 9th grader in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in Frederick County. Last year, I came to testify for SB0646, a bill practically identical to the current bill, SB0892. I was even told I was the best testifier the committee had heard so far that day! I came as an 8th grader from Frederick Classical Charter School (FCCS) and I had many friends with me from charter schools in Frederick County. We were representing more than 24,000 public charter school students in 53 public charter schools across the state who did not get their needs filled when the bill was not passed last year. I am here to reiterate what I said before, and I sincerely hope that the Senate Committee will see and fulfill the needs of this community.

Please watch my testimony from March 7, 2023, for SB0646 (Starting at 1:12:00):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=jA-VgiKpTbY&list=PL7b1g7sUFsqjnBbKbpobr-qJEclhmtllz&index=23>

Maryland charter schools have gone over 20 years without any public funding to pay for our school buildings. Per Pupil Allocation (PPA) *does* in fact provide operational funding which *is* commensurate with our peers. Unfortunately, charter schools do not get to spend all of this money on student learning; we have to pay rent. My past school's building (between rent and facility management) costs about \$730,000 every year, or about 17% of their PPA. My sister's school, Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MVMPCS), recently bought and renovated a building. Their previous building was a century-old church that was constantly having severe facility issues, sometimes so bad that they had to cancel school. Their new building cost them a total of around \$16 million dollars (buying and renovations), which is almost \$30 million dollars less than building a new public neighborhood elementary school. Passing this bill would mean they, as well as all other charter schools suffering the same issue, can immediately hire the staff members they need as well as fix and/or improve their buildings. In the future, charter schools in Maryland may have a chance to have real school buildings, with outdoor green spaces, maybe with nice cafeterias and regular gyms and science labs and working heating and air conditioning.

Charter schools are important to the community as well. It allows families to have options of different places to send their students to public school. Charter schools are also extremely diverse, and have a unique environment that is not quite present at all public schools. Having gone to a public school almost my whole schooling career, the experience prepared me well for high school and the International Baccalaureate program I have been accepted into. The teachers love their jobs, and the kids are able to feel engaged and included. There are 42 people in each grade at FCCS, which was really great to be able to get to know everybody and have a personal relationship with each one of my peers, as well as my teachers. FCCS is currently ranked #1 best charter elementary school in Maryland, as well as #1 best charter middle school in Maryland. MVMPCS is ranked #3 and #4, respectively.

Please understand that charter school funding does not take anything away from other public school students whatsoever, and this bill does not impact them at all. Public charter school students are all public school students too, but they do not receive a fair and equitable level of public funding compared to their peers in traditional public schools. Each public charter school student is given on average \$2,000 dollars less every single year, just because they

choose to attend a different kind of public school. This bill will cost about \$48 million per year, which is not much at all compared to the overall education spending in Maryland.

I ask on behalf of every single student currently attending or will in the future attend a Maryland charter school: please pass this crucial bill, and make sure that it is mandatory to include in the budget every year. Thank you, senators, for all you do for our community.

SB0892 bill for Shephard Nnameka.pdf

Uploaded by: Shephard Nnameka

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Paul D. Corderman,

As a student at Frederick Classical Charter School, I ask for your consideration and support of SB0892 School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment, sponsored by Senator McCray.

This bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The critical funding provided through SB0892 will directly benefit public charter school students and teachers who have so far never been provided equitable funding in Maryland. It will also be a benefit to school districts and an investment in the communities where charter schools operate.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance. SB0892 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for reimbursement up to \$2000 per pupil annually for actual eligible facilities-related expenses. It also provides a mechanism for federal funding to flow to Maryland, which cannot occur without establishment of this fund. This commensurate investment in education does not impact the Blueprint formula nor 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 operating dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong 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.

Charter school students are public school students and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint operating dollars (around 17-20%) to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools and LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to balance the inequities that public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

Public charter schools have demonstrated proven results in Maryland for the past 20 years – they are required to maintain above average performance standards for student outcomes. It is about time we get to work funding these public school facilities so that operating dollars can be spent where they were intended – on teachers, curriculum, and programming for students. I look forward to the Budget & Tax hearing on February 21st and your support of SB0892, School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment. Please know that it is not only my family, but the larger charter school

community across the state – more than 24,000 students, 53 schools in eight districts – in need of your help here again to make Maryland schools world-class.

I would also like to say a big thank you to Senator Cory McCray for sponsoring this bill in support of my education.

Thank you,

Shephard Nnameka

Frederick County .

SB0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Tabatha Camacho

Position: FAV

Dear Chairperson,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB0892, which proposes the establishment of the Public Charter School Facility Fund. As a concerned citizen], I believe this legislation is crucial for the advancement of education equity and the empowerment of charter schools in our state.

I am writing to you today as a parent, educator, and community member. I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that many charter schools face in securing adequate facilities for their students. This issue not only impedes their ability to provide quality education but also exacerbates disparities within our education system.

SB0892 seeks to address this pressing issue by establishing the Public Charter School Facility Fund. This fund will provide financial assistance to charter schools for the acquisition, construction, renovation, and maintenance of school facilities. By creating a dedicated funding stream, this legislation will ensure that charter schools have equitable access to the resources they need to thrive.

The passage of SB0892 will have several significant benefits for our communities. Firstly, it will promote educational equity by leveling the playing field for charter schools, allowing them to compete on an equal footing with traditional public schools. Additionally, by investing in charter school facilities, we are investing in the future of our students and our state. Quality facilities create an environment conducive to learning and contribute to the overall well-being of students and staff.

In conclusion, I urge you to support SB0892 and prioritize the establishment of the Public Charter School Facility Fund. By doing so, we can take a significant step towards ensuring that all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities, regardless of their zip code or background. Thank you for considering my testimony, and I hope you will join me in supporting this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Tabatha Camacho

CLF Finance Letter in Support of SB 0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Vedat Dogan

Position: FAV



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



February 21, 2024

Written Testimony for SB0892

As the Chief Financial Officer of the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation (CLF), a role I have proudly held since 2011, I have had the privilege of overseeing our organization's financial operations through periods of significant growth and development. My journey with CLF, from Director of Purchasing to Business Manager and now CFO, has given me a firsthand perspective on the financial challenges and opportunities facing public charter schools in Maryland. With an educational background in Economics, Business Administration, and Education, and as I prepare for the CPA exam, I am fully committed to the fiscal health and strategic development of our schools.

Today, I write to express our enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 0892 (SB0892), legislation that represents a critical step forward in addressing the long-standing inequities in capital funding for facilities between public charter schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs). This bill proposes a practical and equitable solution by establishing a fund managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), allowing public charter schools to apply for up to \$2,000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses.

The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. Currently, LEAs have access to capital funding and general funds from various sources to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance—resources not available to public charter schools. This discrepancy forces charter schools to divert substantial amounts of funding from educational programs to cover facilities costs. SB0892 offers a pathway to redirect these funds back to where they belong: directly supporting the educational experiences of our students.

Our commitment to providing a world-class education is often hampered by the limitations of our physical infrastructure. The reality is that many of our schools operate in buildings that are older, in need of repair, or not fully suited to the innovative educational programs we wish to offer. This not only affects the learning environment but also places unnecessary stress on our dedicated teachers and limits the educational opportunities available to our students.

SB0892 addresses these challenges head-on without impacting the Blueprint formula or taking funding away from other public school students. The bill ensures that state general funds are allocated in a way that enhances the educational infrastructure for charter schools, thereby leveling the playing field for all public school students in Maryland. Furthermore, it establishes strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency, ensuring that investments in our facilities are made with the utmost integrity and foresight.

The Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation, along with the larger charter school community in Maryland, which includes more than 24,000 families and 53 schools across eight districts, stands united in support of SB0892. We believe that all students, regardless of the type of public school they attend, deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, and adequately equipped school buildings.

Sincerely,

Vedat Dogan

Chief Financial Officer- Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation

Afya_Baltimore_SB0892_testimony_2_20_24.pdf

Uploaded by: Will McKenna

Position: FAV



February 20, 2024

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of SB0892 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray. As a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on February 21, 2024.

[Afya Baltimore Inc. \(ABI\)](#) is a nonprofit organization responsible for managing public charter schools in Baltimore City. Afya is a Swahili word for health, and health and wellness are at the heart of all that we do. ABI provides the foundational and operational support necessary for our schools to do the work of helping Baltimore's children to live healthy, balanced lives: intellectually, socially/emotionally, and physically.

ABI operates two schools across three facilities - The Tunbridge School (Elementary and Middle School at the York Rd. Campus) and The Belair-Edison School (Elementary School at the Brehms Ln. Campus and Middle School at the Brendan Ave. Campus). Two of these facilities are in historical former parochial school buildings which we own. The third facility is in a Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) owned building which we lease. We pay utilities only and are responsible for all other repairs and maintenance on the property, including significant capital investment.

The two operator-owned buildings were in great disrepair when we purchased them in 2007 and 2010, as they had been pretty much abandoned for years prior as the Catholic schools went out of business. Our district-owned building was in poor condition as well when we began leasing it in 2016. At that time, and every year since, we have invested in our buildings. From our per pupil funding, we pay for:

- debt service on two of our buildings, and rent on the third
- capital improvements each summer - both as a requirement of our loans and for the high standards we hold for our school communities
- utilities - with outdated HVAC, drafty buildings that are not energy efficient
- facility and cleaning staff to cover 159,000 square feet across three campuses
- security - comprehensive security systems including cameras and monitoring systems
- insurance - comprehensive property and liability insurance
- landscaping - annual upkeep across five acres of grounds, including planting, forestry work, and mulching
- regular upkeep and repairs on everything from signage to graffiti removal to lighting

On average in our schools, we spend 10% of our per pupil allocation on these things. Much of the money we spend ON these facilities could be spent IN our classrooms, with the passage of SB0892.



SB0892 is a smart piece of legislation that aligns well with the mission of charter schools— the reimbursable funds are managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), allowing for accountability and transparency with Maryland State’s General Fund money, and holding public charter schools to a high standard with autonomy to make decisions that work best for their school communities. This funding does not impact the Blueprint formula or take funding away from any other public school students. Instead, SB0892 will allow more Blueprint dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility.

Charter school students are public school students; charter school staff are union employees — they deserve to be in 21st century buildings as much as their colleagues and classmates in traditional buildings do. Families and teachers that choose to be in a charter school - a choice which is their right to make according to Maryland State Law - should not have to be in older buildings that are more in need of repair.

We hope you will support the more than 24,000 students, across 53 schools in eight districts in Maryland with the passage of SB0892. I am happy to discuss this bill and the positive impact it will have on our schools any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will McKenna".

Will McKenna
Founder and Executive Director
Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI)
wmckenna@afyabaltimore.org
410-736-8980



February 20, 2024

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee:

Please accept this letter in support of SB0892: School Construction - Public Charter Schools Facility Fund - Establishment.

Craig Gaulden Davis has been working with Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) since 2019, providing comprehensive architectural services and assisting ABI with strategic planning related to its facilities.

We have worked extensively on two of the three ABI facilities, The Tunbridge School and The Belair-Edison School | Brendan Campus, which are in historical former parochial school buildings. We also work on school buildings around Baltimore and around the state so we are quite familiar with all aspects of facility enhancement and maintenance.

ABI has a 10-year commitment to facility upgrades - it's of utmost importance to keep these buildings in great shape while updating for 21st century learning and the challenges of this with limited resources are many.

Per pupil reimbursable funds from the successful passage of SB0892, which will pay for things like debt service, utilities, cleaning crews, safety/security, insurance, landscaping, regular repairs and maintenance, allows more money to be allocated to the children and the classrooms. Saved funding also allows allocation of funds to the capital expenses/architectural upgrades/renovations so desperately needed in these old buildings. For this reason we ask the Maryland State Senate Budget & Tax Committee to support SB0892: School Construction - Public Charter Schools Facility Fund - Establishment, which will provide equitable funding for the 52 public charter schools and 24,000+ students who attend them in Maryland.

Sincerely,

CRAIG GAULDEN DAVIS, INC.

James H. Determan, FAIA
Principal



2116 Holder Ave,
Suite 100
Baltimore, MD 21207

2/20/2024

Dear Maryland State Senate Budget and Tax Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of SB0892: School Construction - Public Charter Schools Facility Fund - Establishment. Communication Systems Design has been working with Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) since 2008, providing comprehensive IT services and products to their three facilities - The Tunbridge School, The Belair-Edison School | Brehms Campus and The Belair-Edison School | Brendan Campus - in the areas of computer hardware, security cameras and surveillance, and internet access.

ABI has a high standard for the equipment students' use, commitment to upgrading and maintaining hardware, and using the latest technology to ensure its schools are safe for students and staff alike. This commitment takes an extraordinary financial investment on an annual basis, for which ABI's current funding source almost exclusively comes from its per pupil allocation. Facilities funding for all public charter schools, including ABI's, would be incredibly helpful.

We ask the Maryland State Senate Budget & Tax Committee to support SB0892: School Construction - Public Charter Schools Facility Fund - Establishment, which will provide equitable funding for the 52 public charter schools and more than 24,000 kids who attend them in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Troy W. Stokes Sr, CLVES

Troy W. Stokes, Sr

Troy W. Stokes
Project Manager
(410) 594-0900 (Office)
(410) 929-2116 (Mobile)

In 2019 we researched the history of our three buildings and wrote a series of blog posts about them. Simply put: We love our schools. These buildings in Govans and Belair-Edison are filled with history and we've filled them with the hopes and joys of the present and future. We invest in their daily maintenance keeping them shiny and clean, safe and secure, both inside and outside, and try our very best to make important capital improvements annually. **Facilities funding support from Maryland will help us continue our work in these beautiful old buildings and make our teaching and learning and gathering even better as per pupil dollars can stay IN the classroom where they belong.**

— Will McKenna, Founder and Executive Director | Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI)

See the series of blog posts on our website at www.afyabaltimore.org/contact/blog

These Old Buildings | Introduction

Posted March 25, 2019

I went to [St. John Catholic School](#), in Westminster, MD, from first through fifth grade. I wasn't a very curious student. The most vivid memories I have of my education during that time include running from the nuns, playing tackle ball at recess, and being asked by Sister Sarah, after getting caught spit-balling in the back of the classroom, if I was prepared, at the early age of 10, to die.

It is the gym at St. John's that I remember most. I was at home in the gym, where I played basketball for hours on end. The gym was cramped—a shot from one end to the other would be well within Steph Curry's range—but echoed with cheer and character.



Two of the three schools which Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) operates are located in former Catholic school buildings. [Afya Public Charter School](#) (opened 2008) is located in the old [Shrine of the Little Flower School](#) in Belair-Edison. [Tunbridge Public Charter School's](#) building (opened 2010) was once the home of the [St. Mary of the Assumption School](#) in Govans. Both of these schools have long and beautiful histories, much like St. John's. Our third school, [Brehms Lane Public Charter School](#) (opened 2016), is in a City Schools' owned building, also in Belair-Edison, and has an interesting history of its own.

As we renovate and take care of these old buildings, we aim to amplify our mission and infuse our vision of the work. We want to make these school buildings— which include gymnasiums, chapels turned into science labs, old oak church pews, stained glass windows, stonework that was quarried and laid by master craftsmen, bomb shelters, cupolas, spiral staircases, and secret spaces— our very own. We also try to respect our past, the history of our old buildings, and the people who lived and worked and played in them before our time. For a detailed history of these special places, visit the lobby in each of our facilities, and see for yourself the rich history we wish to preserve.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be releasing a series of blog posts to honor the histories of our three buildings. Enjoy.

These Old Buildings | 2800 Brendan Ave.

Posted March 27, 2019

A Series of Stories About the School Buildings in Which We Live, Work, and Play

Introduction

Afya opened its doors for the first time in August 2008 with support from the [Abell Foundation](#) and the [Reinvestment Fund](#). The first class that year had 115 students. Eighty-one years earlier, another school started its first year in this same spot, The Shrine of the Little Flower School. On September 14, 1927, The Shrine started with 227 students and had 12 rooms for students and staff. The [church](#), of the same name, was located in the basement of the property, and its entrance faced north, towards Kentucky Avenue.



Over the years, The Shrine's parish grew dramatically. In 1946, a convent for the nuns was built. In 1951, a new church was constructed. In 1956, the Shrine added two additional wings to the building. At its peak, enrollment at the Shrine's school reached 1,700 students. As reported by Paul McMullen, in his [article](#) about Shrine's history, "Greg Malanowski, 61, was a second-grader that year [1959-69]. 'There were 80 kids in my first-grade classroom, and there were two other first-grade classes,' said Malanowski. The Scout troop was so large, half of us met on Monday, the other half on Friday, at the hut in Herring Run Park."

The Shrine thrived for many decades and then, as Baltimore's population began to decline in the 1980s and 90s, struggled to survive. Eventually, in 2005, the school closed.

The old church is now Afya's cafeteria. The convent is now the [Green School of Baltimore](#). Afya has been operating for more than a decade, and in August of 2018, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners voted to merge Afya with Brehms Lane, to create a dual facility pre-k through eighth grade school.

The future of the Brendan Ave. property is changing all the time. Still, in a single place, a single space, the old and the new, the past and the future, mingle as one.

These Old Buildings | 3536 Brehms Ln.

Posted April 1, 2019

A Series of Stories About the School Buildings in Which We Live, Work, and Play

Introduction

2800 Brendan Ave.

5504 York Rd.



Belair, or “Belle Aire” as it was known back in 1735, has a rich history in our city. The community originated through a land grant which was issued to Daniel Scott in 1731 and was home to a mere 200 residents around the mid 1800s. Now, with a bolstering population of over 30,000 in the combined Belair-Edison community, it is home to Brehms Lane Public Charter School. Before it became a school for our children, Brehms Lane was in a large area owned by three of the most prominent men at the time in Baltimore: George Brehm, George Lamley, and George Erdman. Not surprisingly, the area became known as Georgetown, with George Brehm owning some 624 acres. Brehm also owned many breweries in the area and underground tunnels have been found where the brewery stored its ales.

The community started to grow in the 1920s and '30s and by the 1940s, when the neighborhood Belair-Edison was officially established, there were more than 1,700 dwellings in the area. This was around the same time that enrollment at The Shrine of the Little Flower (now Afya Public Charter School) began to boom. In 1936, Brehms Lane Elementary School opened its doors. In 1992, Brehms Lane underwent renovations, allowing for new opportunities for students. In 2015 (2016?), Afya Baltimore Inc. (ABI) converted Brehms Lane to a neighborhood public charter school and additional renovations have occurred, including the construction of new bathrooms, repainting, landscaping and newly built play area, and a host of other work to enhance the learning experience for students and families alike.

These Old Buildings | 5504 York Rd.

Posted April 1, 2019

A Series of Stories About the School Buildings in Which We Live, Work, and Play

Introduction

2800 Brendan Ave.



Tunbridge opened in the fall of 2010 for students in Pre-K to 3rd grade. St. Mary of the Assumption's roots in the Govans neighborhood of Baltimore City go much deeper. The [church](#) itself opened in 1850 as the only church in North Baltimore at the time. In

September of 1874, the parish opened St. Mary of the Assumption School located on Homeland Ave., which was run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. This Catholic school flourished for over a century. As enrollments continued to climb in the early 1900s, the school needed more space. In the fall of 1952, a new school building and convent were completed at what is now 5504 York Rd. These buildings sit just north of the St. Mary of the Assumption church and rectory.

St. Mary of the Assumption School continued to thrive for many years in its new space. After 135 years of educating children, St. Mary of the Assumption School closed its doors in May of 2009 due to declining enrollment. Ms. Phelan, the principle of St. Mary of the Assumption School at the time of the closure is quoted in the [Archdiocese of Baltimore Catholic Review](#) as saying, "God closes one door, and opens windows."

Tunbridge opened its doors— and windows— for the first time to about 200 students on August 30, 2010, after renovating the main office and cafeteria, and branding the building in orange, yellow, and green. The school added a grade each year until we became fully grown to 8th grade. In 2014, Tunbridge renovated the convent, converting this residence into classrooms, community space, and a fitness room for our middle schoolers. Thus, in a single place, a single space, the old and the new, the past and the future, mingle as one.

Advocating for SB 892 and HB 1061.pdf

Uploaded by: Zarinah Cuffee

Position: FAV

Good afternoon,

My husband and I are proud parents of a CSPES Charter School Kindergartener. We chose to send our daughter there so that she could take advantage of an amazing STEM opportunity. Charter schools were created to provide options to students. Is it truly an option if the school is left with less resources because they are forced to allocate funds towards facility and maintenance fees? Is it balanced if my child will have less than her peers because we took advantage of an option that was allotted to us?

We support Senate Bill and House Bill 1061, School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment. Please give our Charter School children equal opportunity and access to education. This fund would also allow for charter schools to have an equitable approach to education in terms of budgets as 15-20% of the school's operational budget would no longer be needed for capital costs.

Every child deserves equitable access to education. Please support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Zarinah & Roland Cuffee

CLF CEO Yilmaz Ak Letter in Support of SB 0892.pdf

Uploaded by: Zayn Ak

Position: FAV



February 21, 2024

Written Testimony for SB0892

As the Chief Executive Officer of the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation (CLF), a non-profit charter school operator dedicated to providing innovative and world-class educational opportunities to students in Maryland, I am writing to express our fervent support for Senate Bill 0892 (SB0892). My journey in education has taken me across the globe, from teaching English as a Foreign Language to leading the development of charter schools in several states, including Maryland. A belief in innovation, equity, and the transformative power of quality schooling drives my commitment to education.

Throughout my career, I have been privileged to witness firsthand the profound impact that a nurturing, well-equipped educational environment can have on student achievement and growth. However, in my various roles—from teacher and principal to executive director and now CEO—I have also encountered the significant challenges public charter schools face in securing adequate facilities. These challenges are not just operational but deeply affect our mission to deliver the best possible education to our students.

SB0892 represents a crucial step towards addressing these challenges by establishing a fund managed by the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC). This fund would allow public charter schools in Maryland to apply for up to \$2,000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. Notably, the introduction of this fund would not impact the existing Blueprint formula or detract from the resources allocated to other public school students. Instead, it ensures that public funds are utilized more effectively, allowing us to focus our resources on enhancing the educational experiences within our classrooms rather than on the maintenance of our buildings.

The need for such a measure is evident. Public charter schools currently do not have the same access to capital funding and general funds as Local Education Agencies (LEAs), placing us at a disadvantage when it comes to supporting our facilities. This disparity is not just a financial issue; it is a matter of equity. All public school students, regardless of the type of public school they attend, deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, and adequately equipped buildings. The current situation, wherein families choosing charter schools for their children's education often find those schools housed in older, more dilapidated buildings, needs to be revised. It needs to be more equitable for our charter school unionized teachers to work and county students to learn in environments that need more space, amenities, or support.

Our advocacy for SB0892 is rooted in a belief in fairness and the conviction that all students in Maryland deserve the best possible educational opportunities. As we mark over two decades of public charter schools in our state, it is time to ensure that these institutions are supported in a manner that reflects their value and contributions to the public education system.

I urge you to support SB0892, not only on behalf of the Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation but the entire charter school community in Maryland, including more than 24,000 families and 53 schools across eight districts. Your support for this bill is a vote for educational equity, innovation, and the future success of all students in our state.

Sincerely,

Yilmaz Ak 

Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation Chief Executive Officer

2.20.24 MSEA Senate Bill 892 Testimony_UNFAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Christian Gobel

Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE
School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment
Senate Bill 892

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 21, 2024

Christian Gobel
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association opposes Senate Bill 892. Senate Bill 892 establishes the Public Charter School Facility Fund, which would provide annual funding directly to public charter schools for certain expenses associated with public charter school facilities. Under the bill, the annual funding from the Public Charter School Facility Fund is provided directly to the public charter school and may not be paid to a local government or county board.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Under Maryland's Public Charter School Program, individuals or groups seeking to establish a public charter school must demonstrate as part of their initial application that the proposed public charter school has secured a facility that is suitable for the instruction of students.¹ Public charter schools may also be eligible to use existing school sites or buildings.² Moreover, public charter schools receive public funding from local boards of education that is commensurate with the amount of funds received by other public schools in the local jurisdiction, and public charter schools may receive surplus educational materials, furniture, supplies, and other equipment

¹ MD Code, Education, § 9-104(a)(6)(ii).

² MD Code, Education, § 9-111.



from the State Board of Education or the local county board of education.³ Finally, public charter schools are eligible for funding for capital construction and systemic renovation projects if they are operating from a facility owned by a local school system and the funding request is submitted by the local school system in which the charter school operates. In sum, public charter schools have ample opportunity and various avenues to pursue funding for facilities.

Senate Bill 892 runs counter to our union's core principles by establishing a facilities fund that is exclusively for the use of public charter schools at the expense of public funding that is not available for traditional public schools and distributes funding outside the control of local governing bodies, including local boards of education. For these reasons, MSEA cannot support Senate Bill 892.

We urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 892.

³ MD Code, Education, § 9-109.

Sb892- School Construction - Public Charter School

Uploaded by: Dawana Sterrette

Position: UNF

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Johnette A. Richardson
Chair, Baltimore City Board
of School Commissioners

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
In Opposition of Senate Bill 892
School Construction – Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment**

February 21, 2024

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners (the Board) opposes Senate Bill 892 because it would carve out school construction funding for a small select group of schools, allowing them to be funded ahead of public schools that may have more serious facility issues.

The Board currently has 31 charter schools within the City Schools portfolio. Of those 31 schools, about half are housed in City Schools owned buildings. As you know, the public school construction program is overseen by the IAC. In its requirements, the IAC receives a list of schools, by priority, from the local school board and the IAC then grades those projects and provides funding based upon available school construction dollars. In making a priority listing in Baltimore City, those charter schools that are housed in Baltimore City Public School System owned buildings are considered for inclusion into the priority list for funding. Those charter schools that are not within City Schools' buildings have an operator that has the ability to creatively raise funds and work with other organizations to tackle facility issues.

The Board supports the diverse portfolio of traditional schools, Charter schools, Transformation schools and Contract schools within the school district. However, the proposed legislation would impose tremendous cost on City Schools by placing further strain on the already limited facilities funding the district receives. And, even if this is an additional source of school construction funds, solely for charters, it then allows charters to compete against schools in its own district and possibly receive funds ahead of a school that is in far worse condition.

It is well-established that City Schools faces significant capital needs for the school system's buildings. In addition, City Schools is a district that is regularly closing and merging schools, as well as returning buildings via surplus to the City of Baltimore, because of lower enrollment and the inability to adequately support facility needs. The idea of carving out additional state funding for charter school facilities when there is already insufficient funding to support the current facility needs in Baltimore City creates inequities between charter and traditional schools – both of which are part of the public school system under Maryland law.

City Schools estimates that more than \$3.86 billion (in today's dollars) is needed to bring all City Schools school buildings up to minimally acceptable standards through repairs and replacements to the remaining facilities that are still in need of a complete overhaul due to

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Johnette A. Richardson
Chair, Baltimore City Board
of School Commissioners

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

their age and conditions, even after the 21st Century School Buildings Program and the Built to Learn Act of 2020 have been fully implemented.

With the 21st Century School Buildings Program, the school board pays approximately \$20 million dollars, per year, in bond payments in order to support the construction of those newly renovated buildings; \$20 million that could have been used for instruction, interventions and other school related teaching expenses. Charter schools have the same ability to seek funding for facility issues from outside entities and pay for those costs. The issue of not receiving facility funding for charters was well discussed during the passage of the Public School Charter law in Maryland.

Also, given current inflationary pressures on construction costs, there is ample evidence that facility issues with in City Schools is even more concerning and the \$3.86 billion significantly underestimates the full costs of addressing these unmet systemic facility renovation needs, and that even more funding would be required to complete a full portfolio replacement to the educational standards recommended by the IAC, and utilized by other school districts in Maryland and across the nation.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opposes Senate Bill 892 and urges an unfavorable report.

Dawana Merritt Sterrette, Esq.
Director, Legislative and Government Affairs
dsterrette@bcps.k12.md.us
443-250-0190

Melissa Broome
Director, Policy and Legislative Affairs
mcbroome@bcps.k12.md.us
443-525-3038

SB 892 - School Construction - Public Charter Scho

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: UNF



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

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President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

**SB 892 - School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
February 21, 2024**

OPPOSE

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 892. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Maryland public schools are some of the best in the nation, mostly due to the decisions made to prioritize public education funding. Over the coming decade, Maryland will invest billions into public education. While other states were diverting funding to private schools and charters – and seeing a decline in their overall state educational performance – Maryland increased public funding, and saw the benefits from doing so. SB 892 will undo progress and set us on a path to divesting in our public education to bring about a negative outcome for our public schools.

SB 892 creates a Public Charter School Facility Fund under the Interagency Commission on School Construction. This fund will be filled with \$2,000 per student in the state enrolled in charter schools. This money can be used for charter school facility rent, maintenance, insurance, or mortgage costs. At 24,000 charter school students at 48 different schools, this fund costs \$48 million each year. There are 889,900 students enrolled in Maryland's public schools. Maryland's proposed FY 2025 budget included \$906 million for school capital projects, or \$1,019 per student. Every dollar spent on private schools out of the General Fund is less for the state's Blueprint for Maryland's Future educational commitments.

Strengthening our public schools should be the number one goal. Diverting funds away from public schools is not the answer. Education spending is an investment in our future.

We urge an unfavorable report on SB 892.