



February 3, 2021

Written Testimony for HB0566

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify informationally on HB0566. 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 comprised of charter school operators from across the state. We represent over 21,000 students in 46 schools over six districts.

Our public charter schools, like all public schools, were deeply impacted by the pandemic. Between the abrupt closure of schools, unclear reopening dates, and students and families left in the dark – we saw our already inequitable education systems become even more inaccessible across the state. We, however, saw our public charter school pivot more quickly and effectively than our traditional school counterparts in response to the circumstances. Our public charter schools reported higher rates of student contact, retention, and success in a virtual setting.

While HB0566 does state that “FOR the purpose of requiring a county board of education, beginning in a certain school year, in coordination with the State Department of Education, to establish virtual schools to provide students with an alternative to traditional classroom instruction; requiring certain virtual schools to provide instruction to certain students; and generally relating to virtual schools in the State.” It does not explicitly name the possibility for a charter school or contract school to provide these opportunities. As we know, the charter school law does not permit virtual charter schools, but if a District or County Board of Education can establish a public school to provide virtual instruction, a charter school should be given the same opportunity as a traditional to be that option.

Based on preliminary data collected by our organization, we saw an average of 92% of public charter school students attending school every day in Baltimore City alone during the fall semester. Given the significant decrease in overall district enrollment, we believe public charter schools are a beacon for innovation in the virtual learning space and should be considered in HB0566.

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

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'McKenzie Allen', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

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