

March 6, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment**

Dear Senator,

I am Carrie Jean Rathmell of Frederick County, Maryland. I am writing to you as a parent of a 4th grade student at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, a school with a total of 315 students. I ask for your support of SB0646 [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 March 7th. I am writing to share why I am in favor of this bill.

Frederick County's two public Montessori charter schools are currently operated in buildings leased from private landlords. These leased facility spaces provide inadequate classroom size, no gymnasium, no kitchen, no cafeteria, and no outdoor green space. Facilities spending (including rent, maintenance, and utilities) for these spaces accounts for 18% of the annual budget for Carroll Creek Montessori and 15% of the annual budget for Monocacy Valley Montessori. Both Frederick County Montessori public charter schools are under contract to purchase buildings to provide better school facilities. However, we are learning during our due diligence work that the overall cost of transforming these office buildings into school buildings owned by our charter operator may prove to be out of reach of our current budget.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their schools' facilities, operations, & maintenance expenses. Because of the budget constraints of paying for facilities expenses from the charter schools' general operating budgets, Carroll Creek Montessori and Monocacy Valley Montessori have not yet secured sustainable, long-term facility solutions for our schools despite a decade of dedicated work. Furthermore, every dollar from the general operating budget that is spent on facilities is money that is not available for initiatives that more directly impact student learning.

[SB0646](#) 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, [SB0646](#) will allow more 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.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of [SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#). Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,  
Carrie Jean Rathmell  
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