

March 1, 2024



Written Testimony for HB1061 on behalf of Living Classrooms Foundation

Chairpersons and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1061 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 HB1061. 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. HB1061 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 HB1061 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, HB1061 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, HB1061 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. HB1061 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 HB1061.

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

Thank you,

James Piper Bond  
President & CEO  
Living Classrooms Foundation