

To whom this may concern,

I am Jacquilyn Whitmire, and I am writing to you today, as a parent at Chesapeake Charter School, to ask you for your support of HB1061 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment sponsored by Delegate Young.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, this bill will be before you on March 5th. 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. 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 HB1061 would supply.

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. HB1061 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, HB1061 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.

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 hearing on March 5th and your support of HB1061, 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, 53 schools in eight districts standing behind you.

In addition, we would like to express how much the charter school our son attends has helped him in ways that other schools have not. Luke struggles academically due to a brain injury. He was developmentally, and speech delayed. Although Luke was in a teaching center, and attended pre-k, he

was not making the same progress as he is making with Chesapeake Charter School. Prior to starting this year, our son (Luke), would cry on his way to school. Now, my son looks forward to going to school every day. He's made countless developmental, and social leaps that I do not feel he would have made at any other school. I cannot thank Mrs. Campbell, and Mrs. Winegardner enough for the amount of time, and love they have given to our son. While we understand that this bill pertains directly to funding, we wanted to point out that even though they have had less funding, less space, and older buildings, you can't walk far in their building without seeing a creative mural, or children that are actively engaging in learning. In my son's classroom, you can see how much time and effort has gone into creating unique lessons that most adults would enjoy. If they have been able to do all of this with the funding currently provided, can you imagine what could come from giving them the same funding as the other public schools? Can you imagine the future Maryland residents, that they are helping to inspire today? We appreciate you taking the time to read our letter today.

Thank you,
Jacquilyn and Jayson Whitmire