



March 5, 2024

Written Testimony for HB1061

Thank you, Chairpersons and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of HB1061. My name is Karen C Hicks and I am a parent of a student at Chesapeake Public Charter School, and one child that has already graduated from the Chesapeake Public Charter School. Two of 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. 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 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 HB1061. 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.

Thank you for your consideration. Please pass HB1061.

Thank you,

Karen C Hicks

Public Charter School Parent