



Ms. Angela Funya Charter Director / **Ms. Sandy Imbriale** Education Director
Ms. Jill Rayford / **Ms. Jennifer Surber** Academic Deans

March 1, 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 Angela Funya and I am the Charter Director for Chesapeake Public Charter School (also known as CPCS) in St. Mary's County. CPCS is a K-8 charter school in Lexington Park, Maryland. I've helped to open and manage this public school of choice for the last 20 years. I've seen thousands of children pass through the doors of our school over that time. Children from every district and every zip code in St. Mary's County come to school on Great Mills Road every day to a facility that is owned and operated by the Chesapeake Charter School Alliance (CCSA). From our start in 2007 of 160 children to the present with 540 students, 329 families, and 65 educators, our little school has provided the residents of St. Mary's with a choice pathway that has only served to augment one of the most people driven public school systems I've ever worked in. Our small class sizes and focus on education through the lens of the arts and the environment has provided a community for children who might need a different way to learn. Our wait list exceeds 450 potential students.

The St. Mary's County Public School System can utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources to support their facilities, mortgage, operations, & maintenance. These same funds are not available to the Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, the non-profit that owns our building and operates our school. To manage our facility, CCSA needs to utilize 12% of our per pupil operating funds which could be better served supporting the exceptional alternative educational programming it offers to our students. 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, and potentially supported by the Federal CSP dollars. 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. Charter school teachers are public school teachers and deserve to teach and have the resources needed just like any other public school. Not providing public charter schools with funds to operate their facilities 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 time we get to work funding their public school facilities. We look forward to the vote today and your support of HB1061.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at the information below. Please pass HB1061.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AFunya".

Chesapeake Public Charter School Charter Director

agfunya@smcps.org