



February 21, 2024

To the Chairpersons and Committee Members,
Re: Strong Endorsement of HB1061 for Equitable Educational Facilities

I am Kristina Kyles-Smith, CEO of Lillie May Carroll Jackson Charter School (LMCJS), reaching out to express our strong support for House Bill 1061 (HB1061). Our school is committed to providing an exceptional educational experience to young girls in grades 5-8 in Baltimore, focusing on their growth in a nurturing environment that challenges and supports them to reach their full potential.

At LMCJS, over 90 cents of every dollar we receive is invested directly into educational programs that serve our students, reflecting our dedication to academic excellence and character development. Our lean operational model underscores our commitment to ensuring that most of our resources are dedicated to direct student support with a minimal administrative footprint. This strategy has been central to the significant growth in student achievement over the past two years.

However, our mission and our progress are challenged by the rising cost of upkeep for our facilities. A recent example highlighting our situation's urgency is an underground leak discovered in front of our school building. This issue, resulting in a significantly high monthly water bill, requires an immediate \$15,000 repair—a substantial expenditure that diverts funds away from crucial educational initiatives. Specifically, it impacts our community-based project learning programs, vital for our students' hands-on learning experiences. Instead of investing in enriching fieldwork that extends learning beyond the classroom, we must allocate these resources to infrastructure repairs.

This situation exemplifies the broader challenge faced by public charter schools in Maryland, including LMCJS. The current funding model compels us to make difficult choices between maintaining our facilities and investing in the high-quality educational programs our students deserve. HB1061 seeks to address this inequity by establishing a fund managed by the IAC, allowing charter schools to apply for up to \$2,000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses. This change would significantly alleviate the financial pressures on charter schools, enabling us to prioritize educational expenditures that directly benefit our students' learning and development.

The passage of HB1061 is not just about funding; it's about affirming the value of every student's education, regardless of the type of public school they attend. By supporting this bill, you are helping to ensure that charter schools can provide safe, welcoming, and adequately equipped learning environments. This support is crucial for schools like LMCJS, which strives to be an anchor institution in our community, offering not only a place of learning but also a hub for community engagement and development.



Lillie May
**CARROLL
JACKSON**
CHARTER SCHOOL

As the vote approaches, I urge you to consider the profound impact your support for HB1061 will have on the lives of our students and the broader charter school community in Maryland. Your endorsement of this bill will significantly contribute to our shared goal of educational equity and the continued success of students across the state.

Thank you for considering our support for HB1061. I am hopeful for a favorable decision that will enable schools like ours to focus on what we do best: educating and empowering the next generation of leaders.

Sincerely,

Kristina Kyles-Smith
CEO, Girl Charter School Inc. dba Lillie May Carroll Jackson Charter School