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Dear Senator McCray and Colleagues;

I am writing to you today to advocate for facility funding for Maryland Charter Schools, and specifically, the Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS) in St. Mary's County, through a positive endorsement of a bill funding facilities support for Maryland Public Charter Schools. I write as Board Chair of the Chesapeake Charter School Alliance, a non-profit organization that oversees the charter agreement for CPCS and owns the facilities that are used by CPCS. Additionally, I am a father of two students in the school - grades 5 and 7, and have fully come to love the school and the opportunity provided by this **school of choice** in St. Mary's County.

CPCS is a K-8 school that provides a whole child approach to educating 540 children from across our entire county. CPCS has supported thousands of families and children throughout St. Mary's, since it was founded in 2007, and currently has a waitlist of over 450 children. Our academic and social emotional program success has served as a model for traditional public schools in our district, and our reciprocal relationship with the local board of education demonstrates how impactful a partnership between charters and traditional schools can be. We are truly a model that deserves to be replicated statewide.

St. Mary's County families want to be a part of what CPCS provides. Through project-based learning, environmental stewardship, and arts integration, students work together to solve real world problems and strive to contribute meaningful improvements to our local community. CPCS families are ardent supporters of the school and its mission and have volunteered over 4,020 hours in the past year alone to support its mission. CPCS students learn how to be good stewards of our community as CPCS is a sustainable Green School and has an active CPCS CARES program that supports families in need. By integrating science and art, students expand their mindset and become lifelong learners. The school offers a unique K-8 model and provides opportunities for students of varying ages to work together, learning from one another as they celebrate successes each week in our Community Gathering and participate in multi-grade "buddy" programs.

Many visitors have shared their first impression of CPCS as being one of a welcoming community. They see CPCS students coming to school excited to learn and share their knowledge with others. Whether making reef balls to restore our local oyster bars, sewing and donating cat blankets to local shelters, becoming changemakers in a "wax museum" or singing at the St. Mary's River Watershed's Riverfest, CPCS students work together to make St. Mary's County a better place for all community members.

Recently, Maryland law, known as the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), has put CPCS and other small schools at risk of losing critical funding. This would prevent CPCS from continuing to provide these opportunities for St. Mary's County Public School children. Our current funding formula provides CPCS with 98% of our per pupil allocation from SMCPS, with 2% remaining at the district level for overhead costs. CPCS does not receive revenue to assist with facilities costs as dictated by the Maryland Charter School law. Currently, CPCS spends 12% of its operating budget on facilities including the building mortgage, building maintenance, cleaning services, snow removal, and utilities. 81% of the operating funds are allocated to salaries. With the updated funding structure from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, CPCS would not have sufficient funds to meet those needs and continue the amazing learning opportunities it offers to students across the county.

We all know that one of the most important investments our community can make is in our children. According to the Brookings Institution "investment in community schools can yield important economic outcomes for both individuals

and communities.”¹ and “the community schools approach to family engagement helps cultivate leadership and relationships that, in turn, can facilitate greater civic involvement.”¹ This is what we want for St. Mary’s County.

I implore you to support the charter school facilities bill, establishing the Public Charter School Facility Fund. **As Blueprint cripples the ability for community based schools, such as CPCS, to provide critical skills for our children, this funding would be instrumental in allowing us to continue our mission while being commensurately funded.** Show your support for our children, our choices, and our community. Support this bill.

Warm regards,



Kevin Emerson

Chair, Chesapeake Charter School Alliance

Professor of Biology, St. Mary’s College of Maryland