

Attention Members of the Appropriations Committee, Delegate Barnes, Delegate Chang,

I am one of the founding family members of Frederick Classical Charter School (FCCS) in Frederick, Maryland. Recently, FCCS has been voted the #1 Elementary and Middle School charter school in the state of Maryland, as per the 2024 Niche ranking. In addition, FCCS has been ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the #1 elementary school in Maryland, and #2 middle school in Maryland.

I am immensely proud of our staff and families, but not surprised. We have a dedicated staff, committed parents, and exceptional students. It was three years in the making, with an initial vote of disapproval by the Frederick County Board of Education, before our charter school became a reality for our Frederick county children. From the start, all of our grades were at full enrollment, with waiting lists that, to this day, are in the hundreds.

Charter schools provide a much needed alternative to educational methodologies in our state and in our country. Parents choose this option for a variety of reasons, however, it should be noted that charter schools and alternative educational choices are not going away. A successful charter, such as FCCS, provides the educational rigor and opportunities not often realized in other educational settings. Parents are *passionate* about wanting the very best for their children. Now more than ever, as school violence, overcrowding, and questionable curricular materials are flooding our schools and our children's minds, we are likely to see more charter school applications flooding our Boards of Education.

Charter schools are PUBLIC schools, therefore paid for with PUBLIC tax money, that every resident of the state is contributing towards. When a charter has to use a large portion of that money to acquire, renovate, or make lease payments on a facility, that is money that is doing NOTHING for the educational materials and staffing that every child requires and deserves. Children who attend charter schools are being underserved when the money that is supposed to be paying for their education is instead being used to pay for their facility. Every year that FCCS has been in operation, has been a year with less than the necessary support staff due to the fact that so much money needs to be funneled to the facility lease. Thousands of dollars of taxpayer money paying for a *lease* when it should be paying for curricular materials and adequate staffing is simply not acceptable.

A house bill which would set aside money for facilities so that the school's per pupil allotment did not have to be used in that manner, would go a long way to ensure equality in education for charter schools. It is the only fair and equitable way to ensure that EVERY student receives the same educational opportunities.