



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 1061 - School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment
House Appropriations Committee
March 5, 2024**

OPPOSE

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 1061. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Maryland public schools are some of the best in the nation, mostly due to the decisions made to prioritize public education funding. Over the coming decade, Maryland will invest billions into public education. While other states were diverting funding to private schools and charters – and seeing a decline in their overall state educational performance – Maryland increased public funding, and saw the benefits from doing so. HB 1061 will undo progress and set us on a path to divesting in our public education to bring about a negative outcome for our public schools.

HB 1061 creates a Public Charter School Facility Fund under the Interagency Commission on School Construction. This fund will be filled with \$2,000 per student in the state enrolled in charter schools. This money can be used for charter school facility rent, maintenance, insurance, or mortgage costs. At 24,000 charter school students at 48 different schools, this fund costs \$48 million each year. There are 889,900 students enrolled in Maryland's public schools. Maryland's proposed FY 2025 budget included \$906 million for school capital projects, or \$1,019 per student. Every dollar spent on private schools out of the General Fund is less for the state's Blueprint for Maryland's Future educational commitments.

Strengthening our public schools should be the number one goal. Diverting funds away from public schools is not the answer. Education spending is an investment in our future.

We urge an unfavorable report on HB 1061.