

CORY V. MCCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Health and Human Services

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Executive Nominations Committee

Legislative Policy Committee

Joint Committee on Gaming Oversight



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Vote Yes on SB 892

Bill Title: SB 892: School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment

Committee: Budget and Tax

Hearing: February 21, 2024

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the committee,

I write to you today in support of SB 892. SB892 bill would permit the Governor to provide funding to public charter school for their facilities expenses up to \$2000 per student.

There is an inequity under current Maryland law when it comes to the funding of public school facilities. Charter schools in Maryland are public schools but they receive no public funding for their facilities, while traditional public schools have access to their local school system general funds and capital funding to pay for their facilities expenses. Public charter schools are required to divert their per pupil classroom dollars (or raise private funds) to pay for their facilities.

SB 892 would correct this inequity by giving public charter school students, families, teachers and staff the opportunity to have the same facility experience as their traditional public school peers who are attending 21st century schools in updated buildings and state of the art learning environments.

The bill does NOT mandate funding; rather, it says that the Governor MAY appropriate funds to reimburse public charter schools for their actual eligible expenses for facilities up to \$2000 per student. Eligible expenses is defined under the bill to include the regular ongoing expenses to provide and maintain a safe and appropriate school environment for learning, including things like rent and mortgage expenses, building repairs and maintenance, utilities, insurance, cleaning,

security, etc. It does not include costs that are not regular ongoing costs, like construction, renovations and buildouts.

The bill is a reimbursement model, meaning that the public charter school is required to apply for reimbursement to document their actual eligible facilities expenses in the prior year.

Maryland lags other states in not providing any facilities funding to public charter schools. 34 states and the District of Columbia provide direct funding for charter school facilities. For example, DC provides an allowance of \$3200 per pupil for facilities expenses.

Even though the bill makes the funding discretionary, passing the bill to authorize the funding and set up the structure for the program in the event it is funded would benefit Maryland because, as you will hear from the panel, it opens up the possibility for the State to receive federal grant funding.

For these reasons and those you will hear from the panel, I encourage the Committee to give SB 892 a favorable report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cory V. McCray', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cory V. McCray
45th District