

HB1430 – Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding
House Appropriations Committee
March 11, 2026

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is **Ron Rice**. I serve as the **Senior Director of Government Relations for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools**, and I also serve on the **board of the Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools**. I am also a **resident of Montgomery County**, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide some context on a federal program that may be relevant to the legislation before you today.

The program is called the **State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant**, commonly referred to as **SFIG**. It is a competitive federal grant administered by the **U.S. Department of Education through the Charter Schools Program**. The purpose of the program is to help states **establish, expand, or strengthen per-pupil facilities funding programs for charter schools**.

One important feature of the program is that **SFIG funding is not awarded directly to individual charter schools**. Instead, the grant is awarded to **states**, which then distribute funds through a **state-level facilities funding program that must be established in state law**.

Because of this structure, states generally must have a **per-pupil charter school facilities aid program written into statute** in order to be eligible to apply. Legislation such as **HB1430 would establish that type of framework in Maryland**, which is why the bill is relevant to this federal opportunity.

The program is structured as a **federal-state partnership**. Federal funds are designed to match a state's investment in charter school facilities. In the early years of the program, the federal government provides a larger share of the funding, and over time the state share increases as the program becomes fully established.

In recent federal grant cycles, the program has made **up to approximately \$10 million per year available to participating states**, and awards can last for **up to five years**. This means a state could potentially receive **as much as \$50 million in federal support over the life of the grant**, depending on federal appropriations and the strength of the state's application.

The **application process itself is competitive** and administered by the U.S. Department of Education. States submit a proposal describing their facilities funding program, how funds will be distributed to schools, how the state will meet the required matching contributions, and how the program will be implemented and monitored. Applications are then reviewed and scored by

federal evaluators based on factors such as the **demonstrated need for facilities funding, the quality of the state's plan, the strength of the program design, and the state's capacity to administer the program effectively.**

If a state receives the grant, SFIG funds can be used to support charter school facility costs such as **rent, building acquisition, construction, renovation, leasehold improvements, or debt service on school facilities.**

In short, programs like SFIG are designed to encourage states to build **sustainable facilities funding systems** while also **leveraging federal investment to support public school infrastructure.**

For states that establish a qualifying program, this creates the opportunity to bring **tens of millions of federal dollars into the state's public education system** that would otherwise go elsewhere.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this overview, and I would be happy to answer any questions.