

Written Testimony in Support of HB1430

Maryland House Appropriations Committee

My name is Ramona Zelda Jones, and I am a Maryland resident and parent of a student who attends Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISOTA). I am writing to express my strong support for HB1430 – Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding.

My son, CJ, is a 6th grade student at PISOTA and participates in the school's theater program. Over the years, CJ has experienced multiple types of education including private school, public school, and homeschooling. Despite those experiences, his time at PISOTA has been the most positive and meaningful educational experience he has had. The school has helped him develop confidence, creativity, and a genuine excitement for learning, particularly through the performing arts.

As a parent, it has been powerful to watch CJ thrive in an environment that values both strong academics and artistic expression. Schools like PISOTA provide opportunities for students to discover their talents and build confidence in ways that traditional educational settings sometimes cannot.

However, charter schools often face significant challenges when it comes to securing and maintaining appropriate facilities. HB1430 would provide critical facilities funding so that charter school students have access to safe, functional, and inspiring learning environments—just like students in traditional public schools.

Passing HB1430 would help create greater equity for thousands of Maryland students who attend public charter schools. Families like mine choose these schools because they offer unique and effective learning environments, but those schools should not have to struggle for the facilities necessary to serve their students.

I respectfully urge the committee to give HB1430 a favorable report so that schools like PISOTA can continue supporting students like my son and providing high-quality educational opportunities for families across Maryland.

Respectfully,

Ramona Zelda Jones
Maryland Resident & PISOTA Parent