

Parent & Taxpayer Testimony in Support of HB1430

Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding

House Appropriations Committee

March 11, 2026

Good afternoon Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Leah Nelson, and I am both a parent of a two graduates at Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISOTA) in Waldorf, Maryland and a Maryland taxpayer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1430.

Like many parents, I want my third child who will soon be a student at PISOTA to have access to a school that supports their learning, growth, and future opportunities. My family chose our charter school because it is a school that brings the arts into the hearts of middle schoolers, the culture of global citizenship, and the incredible academic program.

For my two graduates, this school has made a real difference. My two daughters, currently in high school, are both Theater majors at Maurice McDonough High School and they wouldn't have chosen those paths if it wasn't for PISOTA. Both of my daughters are also now global thinkers and language learners due to their global citizenship program and plan to study abroad for college.

Public charter schools provide families with important educational opportunities and choices within the public school system. They serve thousands of Maryland students and give families access to innovative programs that meet different learning styles and needs.

But while charter schools are public schools serving public school students, they often do not receive the same facilities funding that traditional public schools receive.

That means charter schools frequently have to pay for their buildings using the same funding that is meant to support classroom instruction.

As a taxpayer, I believe public education dollars should be used primarily to support students, teachers, and learning.

However, without facilities funding, charter schools are sometimes forced to make difficult decisions—like whether to fix the roof or buy library books, whether to repair heating systems or invest in science equipment, or whether to maintain the building or expand student programs.

Those are choices no school should have to make.

The \$1,600 per pupil facilities funding included in HB1430 would help create a more equitable and responsible funding system. It would ensure charter schools have dedicated support for maintaining their facilities so that more public education dollars can go directly toward instruction, teachers, and student learning.

This bill is about fairness. Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve the same access to safe, appropriate learning environments.

As both a parent and a taxpayer, I believe this legislation represents a smart investment in Maryland's students and a step toward a more equitable public education system.

Thank you for your time and for considering this important bill.

Respectfully,
Leah Nelson
Waldorf, MD

Former/Future Parent of Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISOTA) and Maryland
Taxpayer