

KIPP Baltimore

Written Testimony of Eryn Lessard

In Support of HB1430 – Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding

Maryland House Appropriations Committee

March 11, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

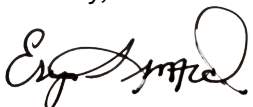
My name is Eryn Lessard; as the Managing Director of Development and External Affairs at KIPP Baltimore, I work to ensure that our schools have the philanthropic partnerships and external resources necessary to support strong educational environments for the more than 1,400 students we enroll. Earlier in my career, I also served as a Baltimore City Schools teacher, school librarian, and administrator; I have also taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate education courses at the University of Maryland–Baltimore County. In each of these roles, I experienced firsthand the myriad ways that school facilities and learning environments shape students' daily experiences in school.

Facilities are not simply buildings—they are essential tools for teaching and learning. They shape whether classrooms are comfortable and functional, whether students have access to spaces like libraries and gyms, and whether educators have the environments they need to do their work well. Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools must pay for their facilities using the same funding intended for classrooms, teachers, and student programs. As someone responsible for helping identify and secure sustainable revenue sources for our schools and student-facing programs, I see clearly how this structure forces charter schools to raise private funds simply to meet facility needs that are typically supported through public facilities funding. For example, when KIPP Baltimore moved into the former Walbrook High School building—one of the best City Schools-owned facilities available for lease in our part of the city—it allowed us to continue serving students at the scale our community needs. Even so, maintaining a large, aging facility brings major infrastructure challenges. Recently, we had to address significant repairs to the building's HVAC system, including its chillers, to ensure students and staff could learn in safe, comfortable classrooms. Meeting those needs required both redirecting operating funds and securing philanthropic support—costs that traditional public schools typically cover through dedicated facilities funding.

HB1430 would help address this inequity by providing dedicated facilities funding for public charter school students, allowing schools to maintain strong learning environments while keeping classroom resources focused where they belong—on students.

For these reasons, **I respectfully urge the committee to give HB1430 a favorable report.**

Sincerely,



Eryn Lessard
Managing Director of Development & External Affairs, KIPP Baltimore
Baltimore City Resident (District 41)