

Community Advocate Testimony Template

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 **Dwayne Thomas**, and I am a **supporter of Phoenix International School of the Arts from Charles County**. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in **support of HB1430**.

Public charter schools play an important role in Maryland's public education system by providing families with **high-quality, innovative learning options** that meet a wide range of student needs.

Across the state, charter schools offer programs such as **STEM education, arts integration, language immersion, project-based learning, and career-focused pathways**.

Families clearly value these opportunities.

Today, there are **more than 25,000 students on charter school waitlists across Maryland**—meaning there are **as many students waiting for a seat as there are currently enrolled in charter schools**. Demand continues to grow as families seek schools that align with their children's learning needs and interests.

Yet despite serving public school students and meeting strong family demand, charter schools often face **inequitable access to facilities funding**.

Without dedicated facilities support, charter schools must use operational funds to cover building costs.

This forces schools to make difficult tradeoffs between **maintaining their facilities and investing in classroom instruction**.

The **\$1,600 per pupil facilities funding in HB1430** would create a more equitable system. It ensures schools do not have to choose between **repairing roofs, upgrading heating systems, or maintaining buildings** and investing in **teachers, learning materials, technology, and student programs**.

Equitable facilities funding also allows charter schools to operate in buildings that truly support their **size, mission, and community**, helping them better serve current students and potentially expand opportunities for more families.

Maryland families are clearly asking for more public charter school opportunities. Ensuring fair facilities funding is an important step toward meeting that demand while supporting safe and effective learning environments.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Maryland's public school students.

Respectfully,

Dwayne Thomas

Swan Point, MD

Phoenix International School of the Arts