

**Testimony in Support of HB1430; Leela Gupta (student at FCCS)**

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 Leela Gupta. I am in 6th grade at Frederick Classical Charter School in Frederick, Maryland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB1430.

I have been at this school since 2nd grade. Ever since I can remember, I have had many big ideas. But I did not always have the loudest voice. At a charter school like FCCS, teachers notice and encourage students' ideas and give us a platform to try new things. Because of that support, I have served in student government since 4th grade, joined school clubs, and even prepared a science project for the county science fair. Those opportunities helped me build the confidence to stand here today and advocate before the Maryland General Assembly for schools like mine.

Although my teachers and administrators have done so much for me, I know they are doing it with far fewer support and resources than other Frederick County teachers and administrators. That's why I am here. I am not asking for much. I am simply asking that our school be treated equitably, like other public schools in the county, so we can have the same basic things they do, like an actual school building. A building where the art room does not have to share space with the library. A playground that doesn't have to share space with a parking lot. A full-sized gym so our basketball team can practice at our own school. And a space for concerts and talent shows so we don't have to travel to another school for performances.

With your support, we can ensure that our school can have the space, resources, and opportunities that every public school student deserves. I hope you will support this bill so that our teachers can continue their amazing work, and so that students like me and my classmates can have the same chances as every other child in Frederick County.