
Testimony in Support of HB1430
Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding
House Appropriations Committee
March 9, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is **Shomari A. James**, Co-Founder of **Legends Charter School** in Prince George’s County and Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO of **Equity Now, Inc.**, the nonprofit charter management organization that supports the school. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of **HB1430**.

Legends Charter School was founded in 2019 and opened its doors during the global pandemic. Despite launching during one of the most challenging periods in modern education, our school has grown to serve more than **900 students in grades K–8**.

At Legends, we provide scholars with a rigorous, advanced liberal arts education combined with **financial education**, empowering students and families with the knowledge to open businesses, build wealth, invest, and give back to their communities. Our mission is rooted in the belief that education should equip students not only for college and careers, but also for **economic agency and community leadership**.

Public charter schools like Legends are **public schools of choice** that families actively seek out because they align with their aspirations for their children. Yet charter schools are required to fund their **facilities out of the same operating budgets** that support instruction, staffing, and student programs.

This structural inequity places charter schools in an impossible position:
we must decide whether to invest in our students or maintain the buildings where they learn.

HB1430 helps correct this imbalance.

The bill’s **\$1,600-per-pupil facilities funding** would provide charter schools with much-needed stability and allow us to redirect resources where they belong—**in classrooms, teachers, and student supports**.

For schools like Legends, this funding would:

- Increase educational opportunities for Prince George’s County families who choose our school.
- Allow us to invest more deeply in academic programming and student support services.
- Provide greater long-term financial stability so we can continue growing responsibly.
- Expand access for more Maryland families seeking high-quality public school options.

The demand for public charter schools across Maryland continues to grow as families seek **innovation, rigor, and opportunity**.



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It is time to accelerate change in Maryland's public education landscape. Public charter schools are a powerful lever for demonstrating what is possible when schools are empowered to innovate and communities are given real choices.

At Legends, we often say:

"A Legend is who they are, and what they will become."

Our students deserve facilities funding that supports the environments where those futures are built.

I respectfully urge the committee to take swift action and vote in favor of **HB1430**, ensuring that Maryland's public charter schools and the students they serve receive the resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for your continued dedication to expanding opportunity for Maryland's students.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shomari A. James".

Shomari A. James

Co-founder, Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer
Equity Now, Inc.

www.equitynowinc.org
