

Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 1430
House Appropriations Committee

Position: **Favorable**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 1430 and SB 0960, which would establish a predictable and equitable mechanism for providing facilities funding to Maryland public charter schools.

I offer this testimony from several perspectives developed over more than four decades working in Maryland public education.

First, I served as the Charter School LEA Liaison and Authorizer's Designee for Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), where I led the design and implementation of the district's charter school framework. In that role, I worked closely with school leaders, county officials, and the Maryland State Department of Education to establish strong accountability systems while ensuring that charter schools operated as responsible public school partners within the district. As you may be aware, AACPS charter school outcomes are some of the most successful in the state.

Second, I served as Chief Education Officer for The Children's Guild, a nonprofit organization operating public charter schools serving students with diverse and often complex learning needs in Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City.

Today, I serve as Founding Consultant and Owner's Representative for New Village Academy, a new public charter high school scheduled to open in Anne Arundel County in 2026.

Across all of these roles, one challenge has remained constant: public charter schools in Maryland receive no dedicated funding for facilities maintenance and operations, despite being public schools serving Maryland students.

Traditional public schools benefit from significant state and local capital investments through the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC). Charter schools, however, must typically secure and maintain their facilities independently, often relying on private financing, philanthropy, or complex development partnerships simply to create a safe and appropriate learning environment.

This structural funding gap places charter schools in a position where resources that could otherwise support students and teachers must instead be directed toward building costs. Without modest facilities support, charter schools must divert operating dollars intended for students and instruction toward building costs that traditional public schools fund through capital budgets.

House Bill 1430 and Senate Bill 0960 provides a thoughtful and balanced approach to addressing this inequity.

By directing the Interagency Commission on School Construction to distribute funds to public charter schools for maintenance and operations of facilities, and by establishing a predictable per-pupil funding formula beginning in fiscal year 2028, the bill would create a stable framework that allows charter schools to responsibly plan for long-term facilities needs.

Importantly, the proposed funding level of \$1,600 per student is modest relative to the capital investment typically made in traditional public school facilities. Yet it would make a meaningful difference for charter schools working to provide safe, high-quality learning environments for Maryland students.

From an authorizer's perspective, predictable facilities funding also strengthens accountability. Schools that are not burdened by unsustainable facilities costs are better positioned to focus on instructional quality, student support services, and strong governance, which ultimately benefits both students and authorizing districts.

From an operator's perspective, facilities funding can determine whether a school can open at all. Many promising charter school proposals struggle to launch simply because securing and financing facilities is so difficult, as we learned along our three journey to secure such funding for New Village Academy Public Charter School.

And from the perspective of someone currently helping to develop a new charter school facility, I can attest that the process of financing, renovating, and maintaining educational space requires significant financial resources that are simply unavailable through existing charter school funding streams.

In addition to addressing an equity gap, House Bill 1430 and Senate Bill 0960 also represents a strategically responsible fiscal policy for the State of Maryland.

First, establishing a facilities funding framework would make Maryland eligible to compete for the **federal State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant Program**, which could bring up to **approximately \$50 million in federal funding to the state over five years to support charter school facilities**.

Second, modest state investment in charter school facilities often leverages significant private capital and philanthropic investment, meaning state dollars can unlock additional resources rather than bearing the full cost of school facilities.

Third, predictable facilities funding provides budget stability and transparency, allowing both charter schools and the state to plan responsibly rather than addressing facilities challenges through ad hoc solutions.

Providing this support will strengthen the sustainability, accountability, and effectiveness of Maryland's charter school sector while maintaining the strong oversight that authorizers and the

State Board of Education provide. It is also worth noting that the majority of states with charter schools already provide some form of facilities support, making Maryland an outlier in this regard.

House Bill 1430 and Senate Bill 0960 represents a practical and fiscally responsible step toward ensuring that all public school students in Maryland—regardless of the type of public school they attend—have access to safe and well-maintained learning environments.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to give House Bill 1430 and Senate Bill 0960 a favorable report and allow the full House the opportunity to consider this important measure.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Maryland's students and public schools.

Respectfully submitted,

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