

HB1430 – SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing as a Maryland parent to respectfully urge your support for **HB1430**, with two important considerations: maintaining the funding level at **\$800 per pupil** and removing the amendment that excludes certain charter schools based on district-level school closures. Public charter school students are public school students. Yet unlike their peers in district-operated schools, their schools often must pay for rent, maintenance, utilities, and building costs using classroom dollars. This creates a clear and ongoing inequity.

The proposed \$800 per pupil funding level is both reasonable and fiscally responsible. Based on current enrollment, this would result in an estimated cost of approximately **\$20 million annually**. Importantly, passage of this bill would allow Maryland to access the federal **State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG)**, which can provide up to **\$10 million per year for five years**. With this federal match, the State's effective annual cost would be reduced to approximately **\$10 million**.

To put this in perspective, that amount is less than the cost of a single new school construction project funded through the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), which often exceeds \$40 million. At the same time, this bill does not reduce or divert any existing school construction funding. It creates a new, dedicated appropriation and increases the IAC budget to administer the program.

It is also critical that the amendment excluding charter schools in districts that have closed 50 schools be removed. This provision creates inequity among public school students and undermines the statewide nature of the program. More importantly, federal SFIG funding requires a **statewide, uniform facilities program**. If any group of charter schools is excluded, Maryland risks becoming ineligible for these federal funds—meaning the State could lose up to **\$50 million over five years**.

This bill represents a practical, balanced solution. It provides modest, predictable support to public charter schools, helps ensure more funding is directed to classrooms, and allows Maryland to leverage significant federal resources that would otherwise go to other states. I respectfully urge the Committee to support HB1430 with an \$800 per pupil funding level and to remove the exclusion amendment so that all public school students are treated equitably and Maryland can fully access available federal funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Yvonnada McNeil

Greenbelt/Prince Georges County