

3/29/2026

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

I am writing as a Maryland community member, public school teacher, and parent of a student attending a Maryland public charter school 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.

As both an educator in a Maryland public school and a charter school parent, I have seen firsthand the important role charter schools play in supporting diverse student needs. Many families choose charter schools because of the unique features they offer—such as smaller settings, reduced class sizes, rigorous curricula, and innovative teaching methods. These elements can make a meaningful difference in a student's educational experience. However, unlike traditional public schools, charter schools are often required to cover rent, maintenance, utilities, and other facility-related costs using classroom dollars. This creates a clear and ongoing inequity that limits the resources available directly for student learning.

The proposed \$800 per pupil funding level is both reasonable and fiscally responsible. Importantly, passage of HB1430 would also allow Maryland to access the federal State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant (SFIG), which could provide up to \$10 million annually for five years. With this federal match, the State's effective annual cost would be significantly reduced. 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. This bill would not reduce or divert existing school construction funding; rather, it establishes 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 intent of the program. More importantly, eligibility for federal SFIG funding requires a uniform, statewide facilities program. Excluding any group of charter schools could jeopardize Maryland's eligibility and risk the loss of up to \$50 million in federal funding over five years.

HB1430 represents a practical and 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 the \$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 time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Colding

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