



Senate Bill 960

Maryland Public Charter School Program - School Facilities - Funding

MACo Position: **SUPPORT WITH
AMENDMENTS**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: April 1, 2026

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 960 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill, starting in fiscal year 2028, requires the Governor to include funds in the annual budget for the maintenance and operations of public charter schools. Additionally, it mandates those funds to be distributed directly to the charter school rather than through the local government or school system.

Counties and school systems well know that the costs of maintaining safe, modern schools have risen sharply as materials, labor, and inflation drive project budgets higher. The level of need in public charter schools is comparable to traditional schools and deserving of resources so that every child can learn in an educationally sufficient environment. But, while project demand is similar, they often function in a very different manner than traditional schools. The provisions of SB 960 recognize this by creating a separate category of funds for addressing those needs swiftly and with maximum autonomy for those schools. Additionally, it streamlines the process and minimizes the workload for county governments and school systems to pass funds through to these programs.

Though counties do not object to this structure, MACo would, however, suggest one important amendment to clarify the independence this bill seeks to provide for public charter schools. When operating freely, and without school systems or county government oversight for projects, no other primary entity, other than the particular public charter school, would have knowledge of the scope, quality, and long-term financial impacts of any updates, new contracts, or ongoing maintenance undertaken. As such, an amendment to SB 960 should clarify that school systems and county governments may not be held responsible for any debt service, as well as initial or recurring payments for public charter school contracts, that have been funded through the mechanism established by SB 960.

This simple change clarifies the autonomy and obligations of the local public charter school while not overburdening school systems and county governments, who likely will have no working knowledge of the debts and ongoing expenses being undertaken through this new funding mechanism. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for SB 960.