

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY (CHARTER SCHOOL FINANCE PROFESSIONAL)

### 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 national charter school financing professional to encourage 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.

We have heard how public charter school students must use operating funds that should be used for teaching and learning to pay for facility costs. We need to keep more school dollars *in* the classroom, not pay *for* the classroom. The standard operating funds should be spent on teachers, not floors and ceilings.

The proposed \$800 per pupil funding level is reasonable and in-line with other states. And it can be partially paid for by the federal government. This funding formula would allow Maryland to apply for a federal funding program that is often overlooked. The federal **State Facilities Incentive Grant**, could provide matching funds around **\$10 million per year for five years**. Few states apply for this funding – states like California know how to access this money. There is no reason Maryland can't figure out how to access it, too.

You already know this funding allows charter schools to pay for their buildings. Here's the secret. That means any charter school that wants to lease space from a traditional school district, can now have funding to lease that space. The money ends up supporting the charter school – and ends up supporting the landlord who is leasing the charter school the space.

The money also can be used to pay to make renovations to a school building. We all know that school building renovations are an important topic. This is more money for school buildings.

To be eligible, it's important that the amendment excluding charter schools in districts that have closed 50 schools be removed. The federal funding requires a statewide, uniform facilities program. We don't want Maryland to risk losing their eligibility for up to \$50 million.

This is good policy – it leverages federal funds to help pay for school buildings and renovations. It allows more operating funds be used to pay teachers.

I encourage the Committee to support HB1430 with the \$800 per pupil funding level and to remove the exclusion amendment.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Mark Medema

Alexandria, VA