



HB1430 – SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding

Good afternoon, Chair Guzzone and members of the Committee. My name is Eryn Lessard, and I serve as Managing Director of Development and External Affairs at KIPP Baltimore, our city’s largest public charter school, serving more than 1,400 students and thousands of alumni across Baltimore. I live in District 41, where KIPP Baltimore is also located—meaning the students and families we serve are my neighbors. Before this role, I was a Baltimore City public school teacher, librarian, and administrator—and in each of these roles, my students were, and are, public school students.

Across those roles, I have seen firsthand how the condition of a school building shapes what is possible for students and educators. I have taught in classrooms that were too hot to focus in the early fall and too cold in the winter. As a librarian, I worked in spaces that were under-resourced and underutilized—not because of a lack of vision, but because of a lack of investment.

Today, my work sits at the intersection of community partnership, philanthropy, and long-term planning for our school environment. In order to expand our successful K–8 program to include Pre-K, and to build school libraries for the first time in KIPP Baltimore’s 20-plus year history, our community came together to raise significant philanthropic support and to prioritize these spaces as long-term investments in our students’ success.

At the same time, we are responsible for the ongoing costs of occupying and maintaining our building—including lease payments, custodial and maintenance services, and critical infrastructure needs. In recent years, that has included addressing aging HVAC systems, replacing chillers, and making major repairs following weather-related burst pipes that damaged our gymnasium and main office.

Public charter school students are public school students—but unlike traditional district schools, charter schools in Maryland do not have access to a dedicated public funding stream for facilities. As a result, schools must either divert operating dollars away from instruction or rely on philanthropy to meet both long-term investments and urgent, day-to-day facility needs.

Facilities costs in Maryland average roughly \$2,400 per public charter school student. The current proposal of \$200 per student falls far short of that reality—and far short of what other states have implemented through public investment structures. At a minimum, funding at \$800 per student would allow Maryland to access the federal State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grant, unlocking additional resources for our state.

Every child grows up free to create the future they want for themselves and their communities.

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KIPP Baltimore

TOGETHER, A FUTURE WITHOUT LIMITS

The proposed amendment to exclude districts with significant school closures would effectively exclude Baltimore City’s public charter school students entirely—leaving thousands of students without access to any facilities funding.

I respectfully urge the Committee to ensure that this legislation includes all public charter school students across Maryland and provides funding at a level that reflects the real cost of safe, functional learning environments—at least \$800 per student.

Our students should not have to rely on private fundraising to access buildings that meet basic standards. This is a matter of equity.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your commitment to ensuring that Maryland students are equipped to achieve their unlimited potential.



Eryn Lessard

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