



Testimony in Support of HB 1430, Favorable with Amendments
Maryland Public Charter School Program – School Facilities – Funding
April 1, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Yilmaz Z. Ak, and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation (CLF), a Maryland public charter operator serving more than 4,300 students in Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of HB 1430, with amendments to set facilities funding at a meaningful level of at least \$800 per pupil.

Maryland charter schools are public schools, but we receive no dedicated facilities funding. We pay for buildings, maintenance, and major repairs from operating budgets, roughly 15 percent each year. That means classroom dollars are diverted to rent and debt service before we pay a teacher or purchase instructional materials.

The past two years have made this burden unsustainable. Blueprint-driven funding reductions and rising staffing costs have erased any remaining margin for many charter schools. At the same time, the State Board's new regulation expanded allowable district withholdings for administrative fees and special education adjustments, further increasing instability and widening deficits. Even high-performing schools that are closing achievement gaps are now being pushed toward program cuts and closures for purely financial reasons.

For CLF in Prince George's County, the risk is immediate. If HB 1430 remains at \$200 per pupil, it will not materially offset facility costs or stabilize school budgets. Under current conditions, **I will be recommending to our Board the closure of our two high school programs in Prince George's County, serving more than 1,500 students**, to preserve elementary programs and meet our financial obligations. This is not a decision we want to make, but without meaningful facilities support, the math no longer works.

HB 1430 is a practical, targeted equity fix. At \$800 per pupil, it would cover a substantial portion of charter facility costs, keep more operating dollars in classrooms, and help prevent avoidable school closures. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1430 with amendments to restore facilities funding to at least \$800 per pupil.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Maryland students.

Respectfully submitted,
Yilmaz Z. Ak, Ed.S.
Chief Executive Officer
Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation