

To the members of the Senate Budget & Tax Committee,

I am Danielle Hawkins and I am writing to you today, **as a parent of two young girls, my daughters, Claire and Jane, who are 6 and 4 years old respectively**, who attend Monocacy Valley Montessori PUBLIC Charter School to ask you for your support of SB0646 [School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment](#) sponsored by Senator McCray.

As members of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why I feel so strongly that this Bill needs to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The communities with public charter schools, the teachers and staff that work there, the districts that include them, and the students that attend them would all benefit directly from the much needed funding SB0646 would supply.

Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, **why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter school teachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or supports? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint dollars to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools & LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable.** Through your support, we can work to close inequities public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

As a parent who regularly volunteers time within the school building, I have seen firsthand the struggle schools like ours are in to keep the facilities in working order to keep our students safe and healthy. At our school, which is a Frederick County PUBLIC school, we receive no funding or reimbursement for landscaping or other building or grounds care. Parent volunteers use their own time to come spread mulch in the outdoor play area, pull weeds, even maintain paint on parking spots in the parking lot, all tasks parents at other County public schools would never consider needing to do, as their schools are kept tidy, healthy, clean and safe by means of County landscaping crews and contracts, as well as County-employed janitorial and maintenance staff. If SB0646 were to pass, our amazing and willing staff and administrators would be able to maximize their current PPA supplied by the County to ensure the learning materials and resources within the classroom, with which the students learn and grow daily, are maintained and updated to the benefit of the students. It would also mean these PUBLIC schools like ours would be able to have safe, clean, updated facilities that foster feelings of comfort and safety for their students, instead of distracting students with aging plumbing issues, critter infestations, classrooms being far too hot or far too cold due to aging HVAC systems. This means school operators must take funding away from learning to address facilities emergencies, to the detriment of the students. Passing SB0646 would resolve these issues.

This year we celebrate 20 years of the charter school law in Maryland. It is about time we get to work funding public charter school facilities. We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only myself, but the larger charter school community across the state of more than 24,000 families, 50 schools in seven districts standing behind you.

Thank you,
Danielle Hawkins, Parent of Claire and Jane at a MD **PUBLIC** Charter School