

March 7, 2023

**RE: SB0646 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund – Establishment  
Position – Favorable**

Dear Senator,

I am Molly Carlson of Frederick County, Maryland, and I am writing to you today, as a parent/guardian at Carroll Creek 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 a member of the Senate Budget and Tax Committee, this bill will be before you on March 7th. I am writing to share why it is essential that this bill passes.

**I have led our school's facility search for five years**, and have an intimate understanding of the risks to public charter schools without adequate facility funding. One of the primary reasons public charter schools fail is because of budgets and funding. Our institution has been fiscally responsible, approving budgets only when a direct, positive impact on student learning is anticipated. A few statistics on our situation should help to highlight our dilemma, which is no doubt shared by public charters across the state.

- Fully 18% of the Per Pupil Allotment (PPA) coming from our LEA goes toward facilities costs. This is money that – at a traditional school – will be spent on teaching and learning.
- While we control costs to the degree we can, increases in teacher and staff salaries occur, often without a concurrent increase in PPA.
- Our rent increases 3% annually and – in two years – this amount will become unsustainable. We will be forced to cut instructional services and staff or close our doors. As a 5-star elementary school with an excellent track record of preparing students for success in high school and beyond, this should be of great concern.
- We recognize that the best long-term solution for our institution is to purchase and renovate a facility, where mortgage costs are fixed.
- We currently have an accepted offer on a building after a five-year search. In addition to overcoming zoning laws that privilege traditional schools, we need to decide whether we can afford to purchase and renovate the building to make it a safe space for student learning, which will total approximately \$12,500,000. This is approximately \$39,000 per child; far less than a traditional school would spend in outfitting a new building, yet we may not be able to engage in the project.
- As you can see from the summary below, the requested funding would be sufficient to allow our school to contribute to thrive:

**Current facility project**

Anticipated annual facility costs: \$944,564

Budgeted annual facility costs: \$473,111

**Anticipated annual deficit: -\$470,653**

Projected annual funding from SB0646: \$540,000

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, & maintenance. SB0646 seeks to establish a fund

managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for up to \$2000 per pupil annually for eligible facilities-related expenses.

We look forward to the hearing on March 7th and your support of SB0646, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please don't hesitate to contact me directly for more information on our situation and details on our budgeting process.

Thank you,  
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