

JUMPSTART
PUBLIC CHARTER
SCHOOL
INNOVATION

A MARYLANDCAN ISSUE BRIEF



JUMPSTART PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL INNOVATION

OVERHAUL MARYLAND'S
CHARTER SCHOOL LAW

This report was published
in March 2012 by MarylandCAN:
The Maryland Campaign for
Achievement Now.

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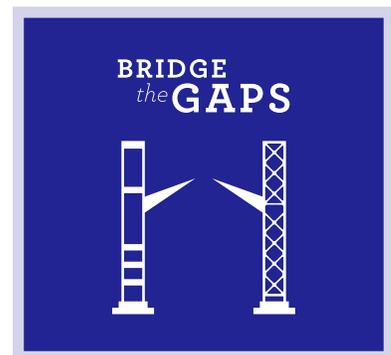


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Introduction

Maryland's public charter school law desperately needs a complete overhaul. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools ranked Maryland 41 out of 42 among states with public charter school laws. Written in 2003, the core tenets of Maryland's law are at odds with the growing body of research documenting charter school best practices and results.

In states across the country, high-performing charter schools have emerged as a key strategy for helping all students achieve at high levels. Research has shown that high-quality charter schools can dramatically improve student achievement.¹ But not all charter schools excel, or achieve their full potential. Key ingredients in state laws strongly influence the growth of high-quality charter schools. But many state laws, including Maryland's, lack many of those key ingredients and prevent the growth of high-quality schools.

Over the past decade or so, researchers and advocates have learned a lot about what matters most for fostering highly-successful public charter schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has highlighted the importance of state charter school laws that enable innovation, promote transparency, encourage accountability and provide fair access to public funds and facilities.² The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools developed a model law, which it uses to evaluate how well state charter laws stack up on 20 essential components.³ In 2012, Maryland's charter law was at the bottom of the pack, earning the lowest possible rating (zero points) on nine of the 20 essential charter school law components.⁴

Maryland's charter school sector: Success, but constrained growth

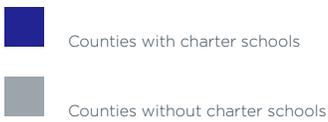
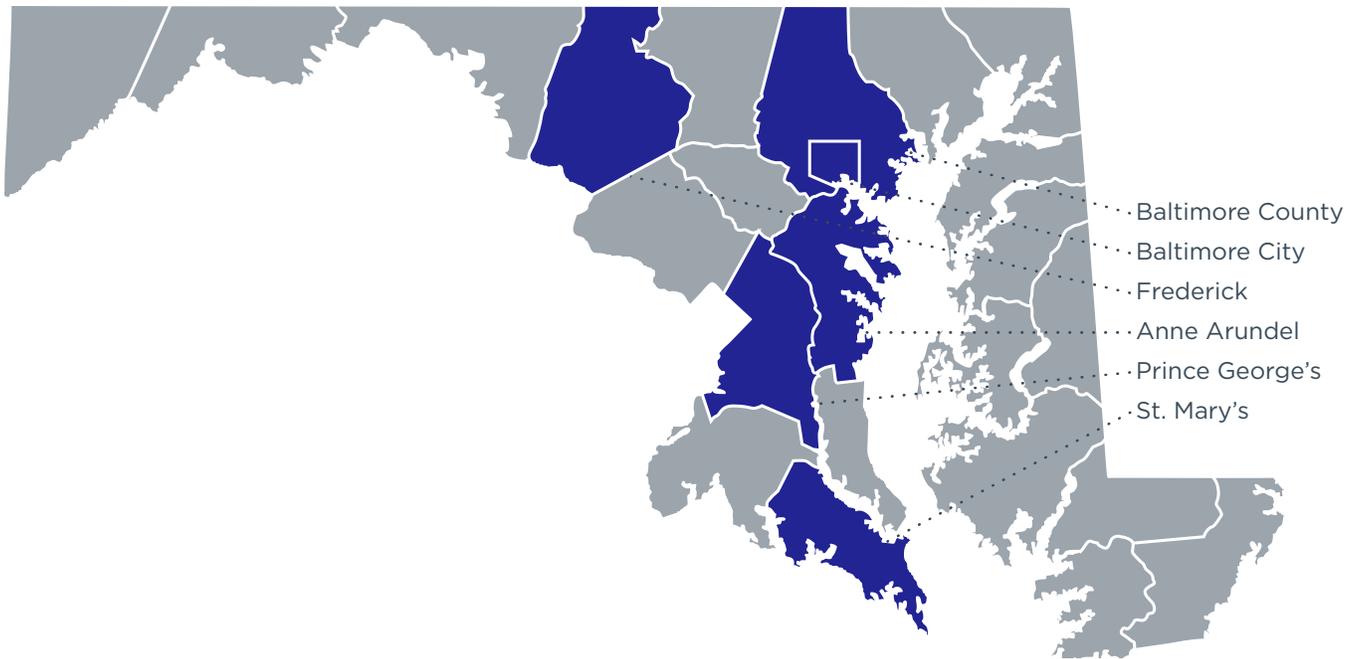
Despite passing Maryland's charter school law nine years ago without an explicit cap on growth, Maryland is home to only 50 charter schools. Only six of the state's 24 local education agencies host charter schools. Over three-quarters of all charter schools in Maryland, some 38 in total, are located in Baltimore City. Another seven schools are housed in Prince George's County.⁵

- 1** Charter School Performance in Indiana. Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO). Author. (2011) Available: http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/IN_State_Report_CREDO_%202011.pdf; Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools. Abdulkadiroglu, A., Angrist, J., Cohodes, S., Dynarski, S., Fullerton, J., Kane, T., & Pathak, P. The Boston Foundation (2009); How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement . Hoxby, C. M., Murarka, S., & Kang, J. New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project (2009); Are Charter Schools Making a Difference? A Study of Student Outcomes in Eight States. Rand Education. Author. (2009)
- 2** Creating Quality Laws for Quality Schools. Grover, L. S. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. (2011) Available: <http://www.sccharterschools.org/assets/LeadershipSummit2011/lisa%20grover%20naps%20south%20carolina.pdf>
- 3** Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws [interactive map] National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.]. Author. Available: <http://www.publiccharters.org/law/>
- 4** Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws [Maryland state page] National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Author. Available: <http://www.publiccharters.org/law/ViewState.aspx?state=MD>

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- 5** Charter Schools in Maryland. Maryland State Department of Education. Author. (2012) Available: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/charter_schools/

FIGURE 1 Maryland counties with charter schools



Many of the state's charter schools have been incredibly successful. In 2010, 80 percent of Maryland charter schools achieved adequate yearly progress, the federal government's benchmark for educational success in reading. Some 74 percent made AYP in math, and 100 percent made AYP in terms of attendance.⁶ At Baltimore's Empowerment Academy, at least 95 percent of eighth-graders achieved proficiency on the 2011 annual state assessment in reading and 81 percent did so in math. At least 95 percent of the seventh-graders at KIPP Ujima Village Academy, also in Baltimore, achieved proficiency in both reading and math on the 2011 state assessment. These numbers are significantly higher than both the county and state averages for seventh-graders. Baltimore City's students achieved proficiency at a rate of 49 percent in math and 67 percent in reading.⁷ Across Maryland, students achieved proficiency at a rate of 74 percent in math and 84 percent in reading.⁸

⁶ Maryland Charter School Network Fact Sheet. Maryland Charter School Network. Author. (2010) Available: <http://mdcharternetwork.org/documents/MCSNFactSheet20102011.pdf>

⁷ 2011 Maryland Report Card: Baltimore City, Maryland State Department of Education. Author. (2011) Available: <http://mdreportcard.org/Entity.aspx?K=30AAAA>

⁸ 2011 Maryland Report Card: Maryland State. Maryland Department of Education. Author. (2011) Available: <http://mdreportcard.org/Assessments.aspx?K=99AAAA>

Three key deficiencies in Maryland's charter school law

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Too many Maryland students lack access to the outstanding successes of these public charter schools. Autonomy could free Maryland charter schools to achieve at even higher levels. Among the flaws in Maryland's charter school law, three elements especially hinder growth and success:

- **Local school districts are the only entities empowered to approve charter schools in Maryland.** Locally and nationwide, school districts have generally shown to be poor authorizers, sometimes actively opposing the creation and growth of even high-quality charter schools. In Maryland, the authorizing practices of these school districts often include inconsistent and unclear performance measures.
- **Maryland charter schools are required to follow the same policies to which traditional district schools are held.** They are considered district schools, and their employees are considered district employees. This rigidity creates an inappropriate level of overlap between the charter school authorizer and the accountable local education agency.

In addition, tying charter school leaders' hands when it comes to operations and governance prevents them from implementing innovative approaches that have helped charter schools succeed in other states.

- ***Maryland does not provide charter schools with equitable resources, including in the crucial area of school facilities.*** Maryland's charter schools enroll public school students, but the state is effectively denying them the same treatment as their peers in traditional public schools.

Fortunately, other states' charter school laws offer strong templates to remedy the shortcomings of Maryland's charter school policies. In this issue brief, we take a closer look at research and analysis that illustrate the problems with Maryland's charter school law. Then, we offer solutions grounded in this research and examples from other states.

To make sure that every Maryland child has access to a great public school we must make the following changes to our state's charter school law this year:

- ***Strengthen charter school authorizing and accountability***
- ***Untie the hands of school leaders in areas where they should be innovating***
- ***Require equitable treatment of public charter schools***

Maryland's overly restrictive authorizing environment

What is an authorizer?

Charter school authorizers are the entities given authority by state law to approve new schools and monitor charter schools. They also have authority to renew or intervene in charter schools they authorize to operate. Strong authorizers promote school quality by maintaining high standards for new applicants and existing schools. They preserve autonomy to give schools the flexibility they need to excel. And they safeguard student and public interests by making sure that students are treated fairly and that schools use public funds appropriately. Strong charter school authorizers put public charter schools on the path to success.

Types of charter school authorizers

Across the country, many different types of organizations are empowered by state law to authorize charter schools, including local school districts or school boards, mayors' offices, state boards of education, state education agencies, public colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations and state-approved independent boards. Strong authorizers exist in each category, and each type has potential advantages and disadvantages. Most states allow multiple types of entities to authorize charter schools. These states have authorized about 80 percent of the nation's total number of charter schools.⁹

Permitting multiple types of authorizers can benefit states in several ways. Diverse authorizers can raise the bar for charter schools by promoting professional practices and collaboration across the state. For example, in a state with a successful statewide authorizer, it can model best practices and provide technical assistance to school districts that choose to authorize charter schools.¹⁰ Multiple authorizers also provide options for applicants seeking to open a public charter school. If one charter school authorizer lacks capacity or relevant expertise to deal with a particular applicant, it might encourage the applicant to apply to another authorizer.¹¹ Finally, multiple authorizers can provide checks and balances on high-stakes authorizing decisions.¹²

Perhaps most importantly, state laws that enable various entities to authorize public charter schools provide alternatives to the most common type of charter authorizer: the local school district.

⁹ Policy Guide: Multiple Charter Authorizing Options. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Author. (2009) Available: http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/Multiple_Authorizers.pdf

¹⁰ Independent Charter School Authorizer Task Force Report. Illinois State Board of Education. Author. (2010) Available: http://www.isbe.net/charter/pdf/final_task_force_report.pdf

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Policy Guide: Multiple Charter Authorizing Options. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Author. (2009) Available: http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/Multiple_Authorizers.pdf

Maryland's charter school authorizers

In Maryland, only local school districts are permitted to authorize charter schools. Unfortunately, research and experience suggest that of all possible authorizers, local school districts typically have the least capacity and motivation to perform the authorizing function well. In 2003, researchers analyzed data from 23 states and the District of Columbia, finding lower-quality authorizing, in general, in states where many charter schools were overseen by local school boards.¹³ The shortcomings of local districts as authorizers can be captured in three categories:

- **Minimal staffing and relevant expertise.** Most school districts lack the funding and capacity to carry out their authorizing function well. Many can dedicate only one-half of one staff member's time to charter school approvals and oversight. In addition, because many school districts authorize only one or two charter schools, they often times do not have opportunity to build expertise and develop a serious focus on the job.¹⁴
- **Inadequate attention to quality authorizing.** School districts sometimes view authorizing as a burden and therefore fail to provide the attention, commitment and resources required to do it well. They might adopt oversight practices that are similar to those used for other district schools, such as compliance-based accountability. Or, they might adopt inconsistent or unclear performance measures for charter schools. These school districts often lack the focus on quality that makes charter schools a promising alternative for students.¹⁵
- **Hostility to charter schools.** School district leaders may be swayed against charter schools by local political pressure, or may simply be wary of creating new schools that in essence compete against existing district schools for students and funding.¹⁶ This dynamic often leads to an authorizing relationship that stymies charter school success. Some school districts may even choose not to authorize charter schools at all, which eliminates the option of charter schools entirely for students in those districts.

By limiting the pool of charter school authorizers in Maryland to local school districts, the state has stacked the deck against charter school growth and quality. Alternative authorizers with the focus, capacity, expertise and motivation to approve and hold charter schools rigorously accountable will be required to dramatically improve educational options available to the state's students.

13 Charter School Authorizing: Are States Making the Grade? Palmer, L. B. & Gau, R. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. (2003) Available: http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2003/200306_charterschoolauthorizing/CharterAuthorizing_FullReport.pdf

14 Policy Guide: Multiple Charter Authorizing Options. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Author. (2009) Available: http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/Multiple_Authorizers.pdf

15 Ibid

16 A Sum Greater Than the Parts: What States Can Teach Each Other About Charter Schooling. Mead, S., & Rotherham, A. J. Education Sector (2007) Available: <http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/CharterSchoolSummary.pdf>; Policy Guide: Multiple Charter Authorizing Options. National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Author. (2009) Available: http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/Multiple_Authorizers.pdf; School Districts Choosing to Charter. Lake, R. National Association for Charter School Authorizers. (2004) Available: http://www.qualitycharters.org/images/stories/publications/Issue_Briefs/IssueBriefNo6_Capacity_Districts_and_Chartering.pdf. Lake also discusses and profiles districts that have embraced chartering as an integral part of district-wide strategies for school improvement.

Limited school-level autonomy

Part of what enables the highest-quality charter schools to succeed is their freedom from laws and regulations that typically apply to district public schools. Charter schools are able to deviate from practices that have long locked traditional district schools into cycles of poor performance. As a result, they are better able to experiment with innovations that allow them to better educate students.

Charter school operators and advocates have long understood this as the “grand bargain” of charter schools: they receive autonomy in crucial areas of school operations in exchange for strong, results-based accountability. If a charter school cannot use their autonomy to improve student outcomes, they risk losing students to higher-performing schools or facing closure for low performance.¹⁷

Research and experience suggest that key areas of autonomy enable many charter schools to produce amazing results. A major 2010 national report on charter school autonomy examined 26 state charter school laws and 100 charter school contracts associated with 50 of the country’s most active authorizers. The report authors also interviewed charter school leaders, authorizers and representatives from state charter school associations. After measuring school autonomy across fourteen areas, the authors converted the state scores into letter grades.¹⁸

Maryland earned an “F.” It was one of only two states in the study to earn a failing grade, whereas nearly two-thirds of states earned “A” or “B” grades. The report authors noted that in contrast to many states, Maryland’s charter school laws “tie charters’ hands with overly restrictive statutes.”¹⁹ Maryland also earned the lowest possible score (zero points) on the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools’ 2012 ratings of state charter laws related to fiscal and legal autonomy.²⁰

Under the state’s overly restrictive law, Maryland charter schools are considered district schools, and their employees are considered district employees. This categorization makes true accountability difficult, since districts, as authorizers, are effectively overseeing themselves as employers. When districts play the dual roles of authorizer and employer it is nearly impossible for charter school leaders to exert any meaningful influence over hiring, compensation and other employment policies and practices. Unlike many other states, Maryland does not grant charter school leaders explicit autonomy in these areas. Maryland charter schools are subject to every local policy. Changes

17 Charter School Autonomy: A Half-Broken Promise. Brinson, D., & Rosch, J. Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2010) Available: http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2010/201005_charterschoolautonomy/Charter%20School%20Autonomy%20-%20May%202010.pdf; A Sum Greater Than the Parts: What States Can Teach Each Other About Charter Schooling. Mead, S., & Rotherham, A. J. Education Sector. (2007) Available: <http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/CharterSchoolSummary.pdf>; Inside Charter Schools: Unlocking Doors to Student Success. Gross, B. Center on Reinventing Public Education. (2011) Available: http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr_files/pub_ICS_Unlock_Feb11.pdf

18 Charter School Autonomy: A Half-Broken Promise. Brinson, D., & Rosch, J. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. (2010) Available: http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2010/201005_charterschoolautonomy/Charter%20School%20Autonomy%20-%20May%202010.pdf

19 Ibid

20 Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws [Maryland state page]. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Author. Available: <http://www.publiccharters.org/law/ViewState.aspx?state=MD>

require the charter school and district to “mutually agree to negotiate amendments to the existing agreement to address the needs of the particular public charter school,” according to the 2003 Maryland Charter School Law.

In short, Maryland charter schools are held accountable for results, but without the freedoms typically granted in exchange.

Research suggests that certain areas are particularly crucial to enable outstanding charter school results:

- **Developing teams:** Hiring, monitoring teacher performance, dismissing teachers for poor performance when necessary and freedom from statewide certification requirements.
- **Managing teachers:** Differentiating pay based on performance, roles or unique aspects of teaching positions. Using professional plans, mentoring, coaching and evaluations to develop teachers. Including teachers in important decisions.
- **Establishing curriculum and classroom structure:** Selecting or abandoning materials based on classroom- and school-level factors, not district-level policy mandates.
- **Scheduling:** Changing how instructional minutes are used, extending the school day or school year or adding programs on weeknights or weekends.
- **Controlling financial decisions:** Allocating funds as school leaders see fit instead of requiring charter schools to purchase district-provided services or to participate in state retirement programs.²¹

²¹ Ableidinger, J., & Hassel, B. C. (2010). Free to Lead: Autonomy in Highly Successful Charter Schools. Washington, DC: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Available: http://www.publiccharters.org/data/files/Publication_docs/Issue_Autonomy_V4.pdf_20110330T165724.pdf
Also see Brinson, D., & Rosch, J. (2010). Charter School Autonomy: A Half-Broken Promise. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Available: http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2010/201005_charterschool_autonomy/Charter%20School%20Autonomy%20-%20May%202010.pdf, p. 11, for a more complete list of areas of charter school autonomy.

Maryland charter schools' inequitable access to resources

All public school students deserve access to adequate resources in their schools, from school buildings to supplies and other materials. Unfortunately, Maryland's charter school law lacks strong supports for charter schools attempting to locate and finance the acquisition of school buildings. In addition, the law gives school districts the option to withhold surplus education materials, supplies, furniture and other equipment from charter schools. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' analysis of Maryland's charter school laws related to equitable access to capital funding and facilities revealed the following key deficiencies. Maryland:

- **Does not grant** charter schools a per-pupil facilities allowance for capital costs.
- **Lacks** state grant and loan programs for charter school facilities.
- **Lacks** mechanisms to provide credit enhancements for public charter school facilities.
- **Fails** to grant charter schools equal access to existing state facilities programs that are available to traditional district schools.
- **Does not give** charter schools a right of first refusal to purchase or lease a closed, unused or underused public school facility or property at or below fair market value.
- **Law allows** facility-related requirements for charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools.²²

Maryland's restrictive law requires charter schools to dedicate regular per-pupil funding to facilities, without the support typically given to other public schools. As a result, Maryland's charter schools have less money available where it is needed most: in the classroom, to provide the excellent instruction struggling students need to succeed. For every \$250,000 that Maryland charter schools are forced to spend on facilities to make up for the lack of a per-pupil allowance for capital costs, they could be paying roughly four teacher salaries.²³

²² Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws [Maryland state page]. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Author. Available: <http://www.publiccharters.org/law/ViewState.aspx?state=MD>

²³ Maryland state information, "Quick Facts." National Education Association (NEA) website <http://www.nea.org/home/49843.htm> (visited January 26, 2012).

Promote strong charter school authorizing by enabling and holding accountable multiple types of authorizers

- **Empower entities other than local school districts to authorize charter schools.** Revisions to the state charter school law should create new types of authorizing entities with the capacity, expertise and motivation to approve only the highest-potential charter school applicants, provide them with a supportive operating environment and hold them strictly accountable for results.
- **Create a binding appeals process for denied charter school applicants.** An appeals process provides crucial checks and balances for any charter school authorizer, helping to ensure that its decisions are based on evidence and schools' contributions to student learning. Particularly for the large number of local school district authorizers in Maryland, an appellate body could help raise the standard for charter school authorizing and give all charter school applicants a fair chance.
- **Hold charter school authorizers accountable for the performance of the schools they authorize.**²⁴ Ultimately, what matters most is the quality of each charter school. All authorizers should be held accountable for their ability to screen out subpar applications and unqualified school operators, for creating clear and transparent processes for approval and renewal, and for their commitment to improving or closing persistently failing schools.

Many other state laws permit multiple charter school authorizers. For example, Minnesota allows local school boards, intermediate school boards, cooperatives, charitable nonprofit organizations, private colleges and public post-secondary institutions to serve as charter school authorizers, as well as independent entities created just to authorize public charter schools.²⁵

²⁴ For some options of how to hold authorizers accountable, see Lake, R. J. Holding Charter Authorizers Accountable: Why It is Important and How It Might Be Done. Center on Reinventing Public Education. (2006) Available: http://www.crpe.org/cs/crpe/download/csr_files/whp_ncsrp_wp1auth_feb06.pdf

²⁵ National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws [Minnesota state page]. Washington, DC: Author. Available: <http://www.publiccharters.org/law/ViewState.aspx?state=MN>

Increase autonomy for charter schools in key areas of school operations

- ***Make teachers and leaders in charter schools employees of the charter school, not the school district.*** Charter schools benefit when their leaders have the freedom to create their own teams and manage their staffs. Charter schools cannot effectively manage their staffs when they are all employees of the local school system and subject to its policies, including those governing scheduling, staff placement and other major employment decisions.
- ***Grant charter schools exemptions from state laws and district policies in areas of school operations.*** These policies include those pertaining to hiring and dismissal, teacher certification, pay scales, class size, selection of curricular materials and scheduling. Successful charter school leaders cite autonomy in these areas as crucial to their success. Maryland charter leaders do not have autonomy in any of these areas.
- ***Give charter school leaders freedom to allocate school funds as they see fit.*** Stop requiring charter schools to purchase services from their school district authorizer. State and school district policies may require charter schools to purchase district-provided school meals, technology and transportation services, nursing, teacher training, special education and other services. These purchases can be required even if they cost more than what the charter school would spend on higher-quality services from another source. These expenses deplete the funding available for teacher salaries and other aspects of school operations. Opportunities to partner with school districts to purchase low-cost services should exist, but they should not be the only option.

In Pennsylvania, for example, state law provides charter schools with automatic waivers from most state and school district education laws, regulations and policies. Up to a quarter of a charter school's teachers may be non-certified.²⁶ Pennsylvania charter schools also receive automatic exemptions from restrictive collective bargaining agreements that limit classroom instruction and innovative staffing strategies. The Pennsylvania law allows charter school teachers the choice of whether to organize or not. If they do, they collectively bargain on their own, so that they may negotiate directly with their employer.

²⁶ Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws [Pennsylvania state page] National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Author. Available: <http://www.publiccharters.org/law/ViewState.aspx?state=PA>

Provide charter schools with equitable access to facilities and other resources

- ***Support charter schools in finding school buildings by giving them fair access to closed, unused or underused buildings.*** Charter school founders expend considerable time and effort searching for school facilities. In the end, the facilities they find may be barely adequate to meet student needs. School districts may in some cases have access to suitable facilities that they choose not to make available to charter schools or that they only make available with strings attached.
- ***Grant charter schools a per-pupil facilities allowance for capital costs.*** Requiring charter schools to dedicate operating funds to pay facilities costs, unlike traditional district schools, puts charter school students at a disadvantage compared to their peers in traditional public schools.
- ***Require school districts to treat charter schools equitably with respect to surplus education materials, supplies, furniture and other equipment.*** Maryland law fails to require districts to provide equitable resources to charter schools. School districts have the option to deny materials, supplies, furniture and other equipment to the charter schools they authorize, even though they enroll public school students.

Florida is one of several states that provides charter schools with per-pupil allocations to fund facilities costs. Florida charter schools may use these funds to purchase property. They can also use it to purchase, construct or lease school facilities as well as to renovate, repair or maintain school facilities. Florida charter schools can also use these dollars to purchase vehicles for student transportation. Funding increases have paralleled charter school growth in the state, to \$56.1 million in fiscal 2011.²⁷

²⁷ 2010 Charter School Facility Finance Landscape. Local Initiatives Support Coalition. Author. (2010) Available: http://www.lisc.org/docs/resources/effc/2010CSFLandscape_r.pdf

Conclusion

Maryland leaders must help the state catch up with the rest of the country in providing high-quality educational opportunities to the state's neediest students. By revising the state's charter law to empower non-district authorizers, increase charter autonomy and provide charter schools equitable access to facilities and other resources, they can help foster the growth and increased quality of charter schools across the state.

Research on best practices and examples from other states point to promising strategies for improving Maryland's charter school law. Each of these strategies would help to broaden access to high-quality charter schools across the state by promoting growth and accountability. They would also free charter schools to innovate like their most successful peers across the country, departing from traditional public school rules to do what is necessary to get results for students. And they would put these public schools on equal financial footing with traditional public schools across the state, ensuring that regular per-pupil funding ends up where it belongs: dedicated to improving learning for every student.

States with the strongest charter school laws allow their public charter schools the flexibility to innovate while still holding them accountable for improving student achievement. A strong charter school law provides careful and thoughtful oversight and allows for the closure of low-performing schools while scaling up high-performing schools with a track record of success.

Research shows that public charter schools that have the ability to provide more instructional time for students and more classroom observations by principals can produce greater student performance gains, especially for low-income and students of color in urban communities. Strong charter schools like these are the type of schools that we need in Maryland to bridge the achievement gap. Unfortunately, public charter schools currently represent only approximately 3.5 percent of the state's public schools. The small number of charter schools we have created struggle under a system that makes it difficult to innovate and also impossible to grow to scale. The law must be changed.

About MarylandCAN

Maryland's achievement gap—the persistent and significant disparity between the academic achievement of low-income and minority children and their white, middle-class peers—is the most urgent social and economic problem facing our state. We have one of the country's largest achievement gaps between our haves and have-nots, and each and every one of us is paying the price for our failing public schools. But Maryland, and the entire nation, was built on the promise of universal education. Public schools are the cornerstone of our democracy. Our future is inextricably linked to the education of our children—all of them. MarylandCAN is building a new movement of concerned citizens advocating to fundamentally reform our public schools through smart public policies. We will not rest until every Maryland child, regardless of race, ethnicity or class, has access to a great public school.

www.marylandcan.org