



MEMO IN OPPOSITION



Charter School Expansion

Education, Labor and Family Assistance – Part A, Section 4

We strongly oppose the executive budget proposal to eliminate the regional cap on the number of charters that may be issued in New York state, as well as permanently authorize the reissuance of any charter that was closed due to it being surrendered, revoked, terminated or not renewed – commonly referred to as “zombie charters.”

Regional caps were established in law to ensure that charter schools would not be concentrated in one area of the state or in one school district to limit the financial burden on the public school district. The proposal to combine the statewide and New York city caps and allow for the reissuance of zombie charters would be financially devastating to many public-school communities.

All over the state, charter school operators take state support for public education from traditional public schools at the expense of public-school students. Over the last five years, 21 school districts, including New York City, with more than five percent of their students enrolled in charter schools saw 61 percent of their Foundation Aid increase sent to charter operators, equaling \$1.2 billion leaving traditional public schools. Additionally, in New York City, the charter school facility aid has spiked astronomically with close to \$200 million of public taxpayer dollars siphoned to the private real estate industry this school year to pay for charter school rent. This is particularly distressing as these communities have no say in the siting or establishment of a charter school, yet they must pay for any increases in tuition the state decrees, as the state no longer covers the increase in tuition payments.

The two budget proposals would allow for 106 new charter schools to open, which due to a legal loophole in the charter law, could allow each new charter to open up to three charter schools, leading to 318 new charter schools.

Furthermore, charter operators are exempt from the transparency and accountability standards that are required of public schools. School boards are publicly elected, and their budgets are voted on by the community. However, the same community that votes on the school budget and body overseeing public schools have no voice or say on whether a charter school is established in their school district.

For the above-mentioned reasons, we strongly oppose these proposals and/or any expansion of charter schools in New York state and urge you to remove these provisions from the budget.