

Coalition Letter: Funding *All* Public School Students Fairly

July 26, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

For the past 18 months, students across the country have had their learning disrupted, impacting every student differently, which is why Congress should not pass a budget that risks further disrupting learning by removing basic funding for public school students. The current House Appropriations budget for the fiscal year 2022 cuts education funding to more than 3.3 million students across the country who choose a public charter school to fulfill their learning needs – and each of those students is no less important than any other student.

It is for this reason that **Congress must reject efforts to cut federal funding to public charter schools and treat all public school students equally.** Moreover, Congress must reject efforts to financially punish special needs students and students living in poverty, simply because their families decided their children should attend a different public school.

The FY22 budget, approved by the **House Appropriations Committee, cuts education funding at a time when students need more support**, not less. The American Rescue Plan demonstrated significant support for education by providing states and school districts with access to \$125 billion in *new* funding. Now, this House budget moves the country backwards, removing \$40 million from the federal Charter Schools Program, a vital source of support for these public schools.

Even more alarming, the House version of the FY22 budget includes a discriminatory clause in the bill that would prevent *any* federal funds from reaching *any* charter school “*that contracts with a for-profit entity to operate, oversee or manage the activities of the school.*”

This language, which is clearly politically motivated, simply penalizes *all* public school students. Separating out and dividing public school students—treating their funding differently based on the type of public school they choose and then punishing students who choose to attend one type over another—sends a message that the federal government doesn’t believe all public school students are equal.

Public charter schools overwhelmingly serve some of the nation’s poorest students, 68.7 percent of whom are students of color, an estimated 1.2 million students who are at or below federal poverty guidelines, plus another 300,000 students with special needs or a disability that qualifies under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). **Under the proposed House FY22 Budget, these—our most vulnerable students--would be at risk of losing access to vital financial support.** This is indefensible.

This agenda-driven budget prioritizes politics over people, and systems over students. **We urge our members of congress to reject this language, restore the federal funding to the Charter School Program fund and treat all public school students equally.**

Keep in mind that public demand for education options is at an [all-time high](#). Learning models that embrace innovation, flexibility and a robust suite of options are key factors for achieving a student-centered education system. It’s a formula that works. Just this year, a [University of Arkansas study](#) found that, “higher levels of education freedom are significantly associated with higher NAEP achievement levels and higher NAEP achievement gains.”

Where state and local governments support multiple school options, all students win. We see this in [Arizona](#), where students are seeing higher-than-average gains on annual assessment. And we see this in [New York City](#) and [Massachusetts](#), where Temple University and MIT have published studies that describe positive effects of public charter schools: The closer a public charter is located to a traditional public school, the better the learning gains for students.

Every student is deserving of an education that enables them to succeed, and that is why we believe the language in this House Appropriations approved budget bill is particularly harmful – by defunding charter schools it hurts all children.

We urge you to reject legislation that cuts and restricts funding to the public charter sector and disrupts the education of charter students nationwide.

Sincerely,

Foundation for Excellence in Education
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
A for Arizona
A+ Alabama
Ace Scholarships, Arkansas
Ace Scholarships, Louisiana
Aligned
American Federation for Children
Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Arizona Charter Schools Association
Black Mother's Forum
Career Academy South Bend

CarolinaCAN
Children's Education Alliance of Missouri
Commonwealth Foundation
DelawareCAN
Ed Allies
Education Alliance of Colorado
Education One at Trine University
Empower Mississippi
Environmentalists for Effective Education
Every Kid Counts Oklahoma
Florida Council of 100
Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools
GEO Foundation
Georgia Center for Opportunity
Georgia Charter School Association
Great Lakes Education Project
Great Leaders Strong Schools
Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
Harrisburg Families United
IDEA Florida
Illinois Policy Institute
Indiana Charter School Network
Institute for Reforming Government
Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education
Louisiana Federation for Children
Love Your School
Mackinac Center for Public Policy
Michigan Association of Public School
Academies
Michigan Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers
Missouri Charter Public School Association
Missouri Education Reform Council
Missouri Federation for Children
New Schools for Alabama
North Carolina Association of Public Charter
Schools
North Carolina Coalition of Charter Schools
Oklahoma Public Charter School Association

Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools
Quality Schools Coalition
Reaching Higher Iowa
Reform Alliance
Reno+Sparks Chamber of Commerce
School Choice Ohio
School Choice Wisconsin
Scott Hammon, Nevada State Senate
Stan McClain, Florida House of Representatives
Texas Association of Business
Texas Conservative Coalition Research Center
Texas Federation for Children
Texas Public Charter Schools Association
Texas Public Policy Foundation
The RISE Schools
Utah Association of Public Charter Schools
Western Pennsylvania Families for Education
Choice
Wisconsin Federation for Children
Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty