

PENNSYLVANIA

(Law passed in 1997; last amended in 2009;
13th strongest of the nation's 42 charter laws)



170 charters serving 98,108 students.

13 charter schools closed as of December 2011.

NOTEWORTHY

Keystone State lawmakers have been engaged for more than two years in an effort to improve and expand the state's charter school law to allow for independent and multiple authorizers, as many school districts oppose the independent public schools and withhold needed resources as a condition of their oversight.

INDEPENDENT OR MULTIPLE AUTHORIZERS - YES (2)

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| APPROVAL | School boards and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Philadelphia School Reform Commission (SRC) acts in place of the city's school board. |
| APPEAL | Yes. Applications denied by the school board (but not SRC) may be appealed to the state Charter Schools Appeals Board and its decision is binding. |

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY

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| STATE | Yes. Blanket waiver from most traditional public school rules and regulations. Virtual schools are allowed. Management contracts with ESPs are not restricted. |
| LOCAL | Yes. However, additional restrictions and red tape are often imposed on charter schools. |
| TEACHER FREEDOM | Yes. Teachers may negotiate as a separate unit with the charter school governing body, or work independently. Charter schools must participate in the retirement system, unless, at the time it is chartered, the school has a retirement program that covers the employees, or the particular employee is enrolled in another retirement program. |

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ALLOWED

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| CAP | No legal limit on number of schools that may be approved. |
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PENNSYLVANIA

(Continued)



EQUITY

STUDENT FUNDING

Funds pass through district. Charter funding based on expenditures, not revenue, and is typically 70-82 percent of revenue, depending on the district. Districts receive impact aid from the state for the first year a student attends a charter school.

“For non-special education students, the charter school shall receive for each student enrolled no less than the budgeted total expenditure per average daily membership of the prior school year, as defined in section 2501(20), minus the budgeted expenditures of the district of residence for nonpublic school programs; adult education programs; community/junior college programs; student transportation services; for special education programs; facilities acquisition, construction and improvement services; and other financing uses, including debt service and fund transfers as provided in the Manual of Accounting and Related Financial Procedures for Pennsylvania School Systems established by the department. This amount shall be paid by the district of residence of each student.” [24 P.S. § 17-1725-A(2)]

FACILITIES FUNDS

Charter School Lease Reimbursement Program worth up to \$270 per pupil. [Section 2574.3 of the Public School Code of 1949]

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

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One point is deducted because Philadelphia has demonstrated its intention to not authorize new charters, and to permit charter growth through expansions and turnarounds only.

[LINK TO THE PENNSYLVANIA CHARTER SCHOOL LAW](#)