

**Washington, DC** – In a major victory for charter schools this weekend, the Maryland Board of Education ruled in favor of equal funding for the state’s charter schools, stating that school systems must provide as much money to charter operators for children enrolled in charter schools as they spend on conventional public school students. Charter schools are new, innovative public schools that are held accountable for student results. This historic decision reaffirms the equality of charter schools and sends a strong message to other districts and counties in the country that charters are no less public and deserve the same funding.

“This is great news for Maryland’s charter school kids,” said Jeanne Allen, President of The Center for Education Reform. “I want to commend the state board for doing its job to implement the original intent of the law and reaffirming that all public school kids in Maryland are to be treated fairly and equally. The precedent has now been set – any and all district created regulations beyond the intent of the original law can, and will, be reviewed.”

This decision came after local charter proponents in Maryland demanded for months that the state clarify its murky funding formula and provide charter students with the same resources as their peers in conventional public schools. Thanks to their commitment and tenacity, the board sweetened its ruling by stating that, not only will charters receive a proportionate amount of money, but the money must be controlled by the charter schools. The ability for charters to manage and control their own budget contributes greatly to a school’s success.

Currently there is only one charter school in Maryland, but thanks to this decision, the 17 that are approved to open this fall are one step closer to serving kids starting in September.

Not surprisingly, Baltimore school officials are already in the early stages of a plan to fight this decision, which might include an appeal to Maryland’s Circuit Court. The suit is unlikely to be taken seriously. Time and time again, state supreme courts and lower courts have upheld the constitutionality of charter schools, striking down 11 such challenges since 1998.