

Florida earns a “B” in CER’s rankings, putting it in eighth place among all states with charter laws. Florida has no cap on charter schools and charters have a great deal of autonomy. However, only school districts can act as authorizers, and while there is a strong appeals process guarding against arbitrary district decisions, the law would benefit from an expanded authorizing framework.

FAST FACTS

- Law passed in 1996
- Number of charters: 654
- Estimated charter enrollment: 291,200 (up 3 percent from 2015-16)
- Florida does not cap the number of charter schools that can be authorized in the state
- Virtual charter schools are permitted and charter schools can contract with EMOs and CMOs, with some regulations
- Florida does not give charter schools per pupil funding for pre-k

- Florida earns 5 out of 15 points for “authorizing.” In Florida, the only entities that can authorize charter schools are traditional public school districts that make an appeal to the Board of Education. This practice limits the number, type, and quality of charters in Florida.
- Florida earns a 13 out of 15 for “growth.” While the state provides a fast track to growth for high-performing schools, the process for starting a new charter is onerous and highly regulated. The application process can discourage operators from opening new schools.
- Florida earns 16 out of 20 for “operations” because charter schools are exempt from most state statutes and regulations that apply to district schools. However, because charter schools are authorized by districts and rely on them for funding and charter renewal, charter autonomy is limited, in practice.
- Florida earns a 7.5 out of 15 for “funding equity” because funding for charter schools follows the same formula used for all other public schools minus administrative fees retained by school boards (five percent for all charters, or two percent for those considered “high-performing”). The law also entitles charters to categorical funds. In practice, however, these funds are not always distributed equitably. Finally, though the state has appropriated \$75 million for per-pupil charter school facilities funding, the funding is limited to charters that meet certain criteria, including: length of time the school has operated (three years), accreditation, and/or status an expansion or replication of an existing charter within the same district. This inequitable facilities funding scheme limits charter school growth.