

Limit Charter School Growth and Restore Charter School Reimbursement

A fundamental position of the Council is that whatever the state hopes to gain through charter schools should not come at the expense of traditional district schools which educate over 80% of the state's students.

For years now, this position has been undermined via rapid expansion of charter schools in some areas of the state and growing direct state support for charter schools. This proposed budget further strains the ability of public schools to support charter schools and their own enrollment.

The Executive Budget would cut in half supplemental basic tuition reimbursement. Typically, supplemental tuition is \$1,000 per student and is paid by the sending district which then receives state reimbursement for the total cost of supplemental tuition the following year. In the proposed budget, the state would allocate only one-half the customary reimbursement while maintaining the requirement for districts to pay charter schools the full supplemental tuition. This should be rejected.

The budget would also increase the number of available charter schools in the state. The current statewide cap is 460 and this figure has not been reached. But to further expand charter schools, the Executive would authorize the State University of New York and the State Education Department to reissue charters that have been terminated, surrendered, or revoked. Our position is that no effort should be made to increase the number of available charter schools in the state until the current cap is hit and then a comprehensive study of the impact of charter schools is conducted.

To further protect public schools in areas with a high saturations of charter schools, we support legislation that would prohibit new charter schools located in school districts where 5% or more of the public school enrollment attends charter schools.

Legislation is also necessary to prevent charter school authorizing entities from flouting laws that limit the length of time a charter may be granted. Current law authorizes a charter to be granted for a maximum of five years. However, SUNY has been extending charters for certain schools' several years in advance of their expiration, thereby creating terms in excess of the statutory limit of five years. To align with the spirit of existing law and to avoid litigation, the Legislature should clarify that the combined length of a new charter and a yet to expire existing charter may not exceed five years.

The Council support restoration of reimbursement of supplemental tuition and limitations on charter school growth and expansion.