

November 15, 2013

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

We are writing to urge you to continue improving outcomes for young people and their families by including \$330 million for the Charter Schools Program (CSP) in the President's Fiscal Year 2015 budget request. Specifically, we request no less than \$205 million for the State Educational Agencies grant and no less than \$75 million for the CSP Grants for the Replication and Expansion of High Quality Schools.

At a time when America is facing enormous economic shifts, budget constraints at all levels, significant demographic changes and an increasingly globally competitive workforce, it is paramount that you drive public resources toward evidence-based, results-driven solutions to both start up and scale success at the pace our students need.

The time is ripe for increasing federal CSP funding because many states have recently improved their laws and policies to facilitate the development and expansion of quality charter schools, partly because of the availability of federal funds. Yet, because of constrained state budgetary conditions, it is unlikely that parental demand for high-quality charter schools will be met without sufficient federal investment. With your support, we are standing ready to serve more students and are prepared to continue to grow at a fast pace while still scaling with quality.

Our organizations are leading the growth and the promise of the public charter school movement, which is now serving a diverse student body of more than 2.3 million students in more than 6,000 public charter schools. Moreover, there were more than 500,000 individual students on waiting lists to attend public charter schools across the country before the start of the 2012-2013 school year. In order to accommodate these students, the number of public charter schools needs to grow by nearly 25 percent. We firmly believe that funding for the CSP should correspond with increasing demand from parents for high-quality charter schools.

We are requesting an increased investment for federal CSP grants to States, which for nearly 20 years has directly contributed to student academic gains throughout the nation. For example, in Florida, public charter school students have outperformed their traditional public school counterparts in math, science and reading on state assessments. These findings hold true for African-American, Hispanic and low-income students as well as English Language Learners. In Massachusetts, a typical student in a public charter school gains more learning in a year than his or her peer in a district public school, amounting to about one and a half more months of learning per year in reading and two and a half more months of learning per year in math. Public charter school students in Michigan also show similar gains, with an additional two months of learning

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in reading and math. The gains were even more pronounced for students attending public charter schools in Detroit.

We also urge you to provide increased investment for CSP's Grants for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Schools, launched in 2010. To date, three rounds of grant competitions in 2010, 2011, and 2012 have supported the growth and expansion of some 335 public charter schools in 20 states and Washington, D.C., created by 18 nonprofit organizations. These grants are made directly to public charter school operators based on their proven track records of success in significantly increasing academic achievement and attainment for all students, their ability to provide sound financial and business management plans, and their willingness to offer transparent plans for closing schools that do not meet high standards of performance. Virtually all grantees exceed the average academic performance for all students in their state or states, and serve student populations that are at least 70 percent low income.

The latest research on public charter schools show significant strides that charter schools have made in improving student achievement. Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) recent report, shows the transformative impact of public charter schools, particularly in low-income communities. CREDO's new study shows a significant improvement in public charter school results from 2009 to 2013. And public charter schools have especially boosted learning gains for African American students in poverty and Hispanic English language learners (ELL). Compared to similar peers in traditional public schools, low-income African American students at public charter schools gain an additional 29 days of learning in reading and 36 days in math per year. Hispanic ELL students make even bigger gains – 50 days of learning in reading and 43 days of learning in math. The CREDO study also shows that public charter schools in several cities are far outperforming comparable traditional public schools.

Finally, we want to emphasize that of this requested Fiscal Year 2015 funding, approximately \$80 million is already committed by the U.S. Department of Education in continuation grants. To meet the existing and ever-growing parent demand for high-quality public school options, an increased appropriation is critical to support *new* competitions for both state grants to start new schools and grants to expand and replicate existing high quality public charter school models. This new funding, coupled with facilities and credit enhancement support, will foster the growth of more effective public charter schools to serve our nation's most vulnerable populations.

Thank you for considering this request. We greatly appreciate your support in furthering the education reform our country needs and our children deserve. Please contact Gina Mahony, Senior Vice President for Government Relations at Gina@publiccharters.org or (202) 521 2836 us if you would like to discuss this request.

Sincerely,

Achievement First
Alliance College-Ready Public Schools
Arizona Charter Schools Association
Aspire Public Schools
Breakthrough Schools
Brooke Charter Schools
California Charter Schools Association
Camino Nuevo
Charter School Association of Nevada
Charter School Growth Fund
Charter School Partners
Colorado League of Charter Schools
D.C. Association of Chartered Public Schools
Delaware Charter Schools Network
DSST Public Schools
Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools
FocusDC
Georgia Charter Schools Association
Gestalt Community Schools
Green Dot Public Schools
Hawaii Public Charter Schools
Idaho Charter School Network
IDEA Public Schools
Illinois Network of Charter Schools
Indiana Public Charter Schools Association
KIPP
League of Oregon Charter School
Learn Charter School Network
Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools
Maine Association for Charter Schools
Massachusetts Charter Public School Association
Maryland Charter School Network
Mastery Charter School Network
Michigan Association of Public School Academies
Milwaukee Charter School Advocates
Mississippi Charter Schools Association
Missouri Public Charter School Association
New Hampshire Center for Innovative Schools
New Hampshire Charter Schools Association

New Jersey Charter Schools Association
New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools
New York City Charter School Center
Noble Network of Charter Schools
North Carolina Public Charter Schools Association
Northeast Charter Schools Network
Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools
Oklahoma Charter Schools Association
Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools
Propel Schools
Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina
Rhode Island League of Charter Schools
Rocketship
Success Academy Charter Schools
Tennessee Charter School Center
Texas Charter Schools Association
Uncommon Schools
Uplift Education
Utah Association of Charter Schools
Washington State Charter Schools Association
Wisconsin Charter Schools Association
Yes Prep Public Schools