

MYTHS VS. FACTS | Charter Schools are free

public schools that offer high quality education options for families. Governor Hochul's proposal to simplify the process of siting charter schools is sound policy. By creating one pool of charters under the state's cap and reissuing charters that have been closed, the State's Authorizers can ensure qualified educators and community-based groups can open schools in communities with the most need.

MYTH: Charter schools drain resources from traditional district schools.

FACT: Funding for traditional district schools is at an all-time high. NYC's traditional district schools are set to receive 100% of their Fair Student Funding for the 2023-24 SY. Foundation Aid is also slated to increase by at least 12% – and likely considerably more by the time the budget is negotiated. Meanwhile, charter schools are scheduled to only receive a 3.3% increase during the same period. This, coupled with the fact that the latest Independent Budget Office report established that charter schools receive less public support than their traditional district counterparts, makes charter schools a financial bargain for the City.

MYTH: Families aren't interested in more charter schools in their community.

FACT: The overwhelming majority of NYC families – 64% – have a favorable opinion of charter schools and support increasing the charter cap. That's compared to just 23% who oppose increasing the cap. While certain so-called "parent representatives" are against more charter schools, the majority of families in the community are not, and these officials do not represent them.

MYTH: Charter schools aren't held accountable by public officials.

FACT: Charter schools are not only held accountable by their authorizing entity, but also by numerous government agencies including the City and State Comptrollers. Annually, charter schools must provide extensive reporting on their student outcomes and operations to NYSED, as well as conduct financial audits and publicly post annual reports on the school's progress. The NYC Comptroller exercises audit authority over them as well. Every 3-5 years, each charter school is subject to a highly rigorous renewal process by one of three authorizers: the New York State Board of Regents, the NYC Department of Education, and the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. Charter schools must demonstrate their value to their students and communities through a review of their academic achievement, addressing of social emotional needs, and financial soundness. If a charter school fails to meet its obligations to its students, it will be closed.

MYTH: Charter schools pick and choose the students they serve.

FACT: New York City charter schools are free, public schools open to all students in New York State. If the number of applicants to a charter school exceeds the number of available seats, then charter schools are legally required to conduct a random enrollment lottery to fill them. Furthermore, NYC charter schools serve nearly the same numbers of students with disabilities as the district (18.1% to the district's 19.5%) and ELL enrollment in charter schools has grown by 63% in the last five years. Charter schools are required by law to serve all students and must define their services for students with IEPs and English learners in their charter agreements. Over one third of all NYC charter schools also offer preferences for these special populations. The cap lift will allow for the creation of even more schools designed to serve special populations such as students with dyslexia and autism, students impacted by the juvenile justice system and children in the foster care system.

MYTH: Charter schools are "corporate" and for-profit.

FACT: 100% of charter schools are not-for-profit public schools that must adhere to numerous federal, state and city laws and regulations. A 2010 law mandated that no new charter school can be run by - or even managed by - a for-profit entity. In fact, many charter schools work in partnership with highly respected, nonprofit, social-service agencies such as The Door, the New York Foundling and Children's Aid.

MYTH: There's no need for more charter schools in NYC.

FACT: Coming out of the pandemic, NYC is in the midst of a full-scale educational crisis. Families want and need more high-quality public schools – especially in communities like the Bronx, where the status quo has left so many kids struggling to succeed. In the Bronx, 4 out of 5 students at traditional public schools are not meeting proficiency in math and just 1 in 3 are proficient in reading.

In contrast, Bronx charter school student achievement is nearly double that of their district counterparts, and, despite the Bronx losing 3.2% of its population, charter school enrollment increased by 5.5%. Let's let families decide – open more charter schools and give all families options.