



**Submitted Testimony from Andrea Rogers, Northeast Charter Schools Network
for the Joint Budget Hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education
January 31, 2018**

Thank you Chairwoman Young and Chairwoman Weinstein, and other distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly, for the opportunity to provide testimony for the hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education. My name is Andrea Rogers, NYS Director for the Northeast Charter Schools Network (NECSN). The Northeast Charter Schools Network is a statewide advocacy and support organization for charter schools. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 281 charter schools operating around the state, serving approximately 141,000 students. These charter schools employ an estimated 15,000 professional staff, including 10,500 teachers. NECSN represents schools from each region of our state, both large and small, including many independent charter schools and others that are part of larger management organizations.

Our Network supports Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget proposal to maintain the charter school funding formula defined by current law. **There is, however, a persistent problem of student funding equity** between charter schools and traditional district schools, **and this formula does not solve the problem.** For example, a study examining revenue disparities showed charter school students in Buffalo received around 60 cents for every dollar a student in a district school received.¹ The formula as currently structured is expected to set charter school funding on a trajectory to make the inequity with districts worse. Despite these facts, it is also important to note that the formula is an improvement over past years, and we recognize the importance of fiscal prudence during a time of stress and uncertainty. We ask only that charter schools and students receive equal funding as other public schools.

The Governor's proposal also includes an update to the rental aid calculation for new and growing charter schools in New York City. NECSN supports this change, which provides clarity on which costs should be counted to reflect actual spending. Further, we urge the members of the Senate and Assembly to propose an extension of this policy to make all charter schools eligible, so charter students in every region finally have support for their buildings. Currently no charter schools in

¹ Albert Cheng, Jay F. May, Larry Maloney, Meagan Batdorff, Patrick J. Wolf, Sheree Speakman. (April 2014) *Charter Funding: Inequity Expands*. University of Arkansas, Department of Education Reform. Available online: <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/charter-funding-inequity-expands.pdf>

Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Long Island or any other city or town elsewhere receive this support. Many charter schools in New York City are denied as well -- due only to the age of their school.

The extent of the challenge facing public charter schools when it comes to supporting facilities cannot be overstated. Our data estimates show over 56,000 charter students are denied facilities aid – more than 30,000 in New York City, and 26,500 more upstate and on Long Island. NECSN continues to advocate for reliable and recurring facilities funding for all charter schools statewide.

Finally, NECSN would like to draw attention to the Governor’s proposal in the Aid to Localities budget to share approximately \$22.6 million in non-formula driven funding among charter school students in New York City. **This proposal is generous and appreciated, but again, we must point out the unfairness in supporting only those charter children who reside in New York City. We urge the members of the Senate and Assembly to remember the constituent families and staff members of the schools in other regions, and ask that any additional funding provided to the charter school sector be shared statewide. Such funding is crucial to maintaining stability and allowing schools to focus on the continued academic success of all students.**

Charter schools are important public schools, offering critical choices to families seeking the best learning environment for their children without the burden of affording private school tuition. The success of New York’s charter school movement has been widely recognized, including most recently by a study reported in [Education Next](#). This latest study presented data showing not only do charter school students see an increase in academic achievement when attending a charter, but children in nearby schools see an improvement as well.²

Investments in charter schools and charter students have great benefits, and these schools have become a lifeline for many families. The Northeast Charter Schools Network respectfully thanks you for your time and thoughtful attention to public education, and for considering this testimony as you work to finalize the budget.

² Cordes, Sarah A. (Spring 2018). *Charters and the Common Good*. Volume 18, No.2.

The full report can be viewed online: <http://educationnext.org/charters-and-common-good-spillover-effects-charter-schools-new-york-city/>