



**National Alliance for  
Public Charter Schools**

June 20, 2007

Honorable Members of the State Legislature  
New Hampshire State Legislature  
107 North Main Street  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Members of the Legislature:

I am writing to express our strong opposition to a provision within the Senate's budget proposal that advances the repeal of New Hampshire's charter school pilot program from July 1, 2013, to July 1, 2007. By enacting this provision, you will stop the charter school movement in New Hampshire dead in its tracks and limit your state's ability to obtain grant funds.

The current pilot program allows the state board of education to approve no more than 20 public charter schools. To date, the state board of education has authorized 15 charters. Although local districts also have the authority to approve charters, they have yet to authorize a single one. By repealing the state board's ability to authorize charters, you will leave applicants only one path toward approval – a path that has resulted in zero charters to date.

This effort to take New Hampshire back to a single authorizer, even for one year, will significantly weaken the state's ability to attract federal start-up grants for charter schools, which are especially necessary given that the state's funding approach for charter schools is the most inequitable in the nation. The federal start-up grant program gives priority to states that allow multiple authorizers, like New Hampshire's current arrangement. Because almost 2/3 of states with charter school laws allow multiple authorizers, movement backward toward a single authorizer system will make New Hampshire less competitive for these grants.

In addition to maintaining its multiple authorizer system, we encourage New Hampshire to provide equitable state aid funding distribution to charter schools. New Hampshire charter schools currently receive 30% of the total average statewide cost of education, which is the lowest percentage of any state in the nation. We encourage the state to create a funding system for charter schools

that treats state funding for statewide open enrollment charter schools on par with other property poor public schools.

We also encourage the state to provide funds for charter facilities. Such funding not only assures that operational funding stays focused on instructional costs, but states with facility stipends, per pupil allocations, or facility cost grants are eligible for a federal charter facilities grant program that provides significant financial support for charter school facilities. Without a state commitment to help cover facility costs, a state is ineligible for these valuable dollars.

Finally, New Hampshire's local authorization procedures have not been used to date, even by districts that want charter schools. We understand that when districts authorize charter schools, they also financially support them. We also understand that some districts are already offering support for charter schools in their jurisdictions, authorized by the state. If any of the current charter schools should actually revert to local authorization, then all the charter schools and the state budget would benefit. We encourage the state to study and revise local authorization procedures so they are user-friendly, function well, and encourage certain charter schools to become authorized by their districts.

From a national perspective, New Hampshire is a small charter state, but one that has developed innovative and effective charter schools. It serves as a promising example to other states in how to provide quality public school choices in rural regions.

We urge you to oppose the early repeal proposed by the Senate and instead join the national, bipartisan effort to incorporate charter public schools into the fabric of America's public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nelson Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nelson Smith  
President, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools