



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## New Yorkers call on Governor Hochul to abandon charter school expansion

JOHN C. LIU February 6, 2023

| ISSUE: NYC EDUCATION, DOE, CHARTER SCHOOL, SENATOR LIU



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** February 3, 2023

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**NEW YORKERS CALL ON GOVERNOR HOCHUL TO ABANDON CHARTER SCHOOL  
EXPANSION**

**New York, NY** – Today, state legislators and advocates called on Governor Hochul to drop her plan to expand charter schools in New York City. If implemented, her plan would allow for over 100 new charter schools in NYC, further diverting resources away from traditional public schools.

The Governor proposes to keep the statewide cap on charters at 460 while removing the cap on charters in NYC. The NYC cap of 275, which the Governor proposes to abolish, had been reached a few years ago. Currently there are 357 charters operating statewide, so an additional 103 charters could be established throughout the state outside NYC. With the Governor's plan, those additional 103 charters would likely be established in NYC.

Charter schools are privately operated but receive substantial amounts of public money. Moreover, the NYC Department of Education is required to provide space for charter schools in DOE buildings, or pay the rent for charters operating in private buildings. Despite being funded by taxpayer dollars, charter schools do not operate with the same oversight or accountability to the public as traditional public schools, and have been known to exclude students with disabilities, English language learners, and others with learning challenges.

**State Senator Shelley Mayer, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Education**, stated, "I was very pleased to hear Governor Hochul's announcement that she intends to honor our collective promise to fully fund Foundation Aid for the third year in a row. The plan that was outlined in the State of the State address would be a step forward in meeting our shared responsibility to provide a 'sound basic education' to every child. However, I am disappointed by the Governor's proposal to remove the geographic restriction on the charter cap, allowing as many as 100 new charter schools to open in New York City. The New York City Department of Education is already overburdened by its financial obligations to charter schools, and this proposal will give a green light to more groups looking to open new charter schools, at even greater expense to the traditional public schools and students in New York

City. I am also deeply concerned with the other districts throughout the state that are oversaturated with charter schools, threatening the continued stability of their local school districts. We owe a duty to every child, including the vast majority who attend traditional schools, and I will continue to fight for them to receive all they are owed. I am confident we can work with the Governor and my colleagues on our shared commitment to a quality public education for every child, and I strongly urge the Governor to reconsider this proposal.”

**State Senator John C. Liu, chairperson of the Senate Committee on NYC Education,** stated, “The Governor laid down the welcome mat for NYC school kids in her proposed budget by fully funding Foundation Aid so our students can finally receive the sound, basic education they are entitled to under the New York State constitution. However, lifting the charter cap would pull that rug right back out from underneath our kids’ feet by diverting precious, long sought after resources away from the schools that need it most. This proposal is a non-starter, and we call on the Governor to make good on her commitment to funding our schools, and not to make that funding a zero-sum game.”

**State Senator Robert Jackson,** stated, “It is unreasonable to increase the number of charter schools with New York City facing a decline of school-age children for various reasons, and until charters are held to the same standards as public schools, I cannot in good conscience support the Governor’s proposals. Her decision will leave public schools with fewer resources and less attention, denying students the education New York State is statutorily obligated to provide.”

**State Senator Cordell Cleare** stated, “The Governor's proposed changes to the Charter School Cap not only contravene the intent and scope of the original law and movement but they would cause considerable harm to our traditional public school students and the entire system. The current cap is in place for a reason and with co-locations continuing to

proliferate while actual public school spaces are contracting, any change in the cap would be utterly disastrous and extremely ill-advised. Our children deserve far better!"

**Senator John W. Mannion** said, "As someone who has spent nearly 30 years in the classroom, I have experienced firsthand the tremendous positive impact that public schools have on student success and the negative impact that charter schools have on the public education system. New charter schools will drain resources from districts that serve communities with the highest needs, sending funds to corporate charter networks with different rules that lack transparency and accountability. The move to expand the number of charters or adjust regional allotment is a policy that I cannot support."

**State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal** stated, "New York City needs to focus resources and attention on our traditional public schools, not increase their burden by allowing a flood of new charters into the city. We are finally meeting our promise to fully fund Foundation Aid, and it would be a shame to undercut our progress with this misguided proposal."

**Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers**, stated, "Corporate charter chains drain space, money and resources from public schools and our students bear the cost."

**Smitha Varghese, Campaign Coordinator of the Alliance for Quality Education**, said, "By pushing a permanent and dramatic expansion of charter schools in New York City, Governor Hochul is undermining her own commitment to fully funding public schools with Foundation Aid, putting New York on a path of privatization that will fundamentally harm the public school system. Publicly funded but privately run charter schools divert resources that otherwise would go to our local public schools that educate the vast majority of students in our city and across the state. The State Legislature needs to show its commitment to protecting public education, and soundly reject Governor Hochul's proposal to remove the regional cap on charters and reauthorize 'zombie charters.'"

**Antonia Ferraro, CEC15 member**, said, "More charters drops a fiscal bomb on both existing charters and traditional public schools! As the parent of a child in a school building collocated with a charter, I am opposed to any new or reissued charters. We must maintain the regional charter school caps. Enrollment is down at 58% of charter schools. Mayor Adams regularly threatens a looming fiscal cliff. Rents are on the rise and NYC can no longer pay for charters in free private space. The majority of children attend traditional public schools, but do not receive the benefit of transition aid that other charter saturated districts receive from the state. We have our fair share of charter schools, at over 80% of the charter schools in the state. I call on the NY State Legislature to protect school budgets, by maintaining the regional cap."

**Erika Kendall, CEC17 President**, said, "It's clear to me that the Governor isn't paying attention to the voices of parents in New York City—parents are pushing back on the expansion of charters, and speaking out and mobilizing their elected officials to protect them from charter franchises. Parents not only want the charter cap to remain in place, we also want accountability measures to close charter schools that are failing. It was always wrong to characterize our children's education as an 'experiment,' but now it is time for the "experiment" to provide data. We want audits to prove claims about waitlists that we know to be false, we want audits of their enrollment that we know to be misleading, we want transparency and—most of all—accountability. To have a Governor who completely ignores us and makes decisions about us without including us is all too remnant of past governors. It's time for the experiment to end."

**Camille Casaretti, CEC15 President**, said, "NYC has no need for a lifting of the charter cap, nor do we need a reauthorization of zombie charters. The current law already provides methods for charter schools to expand. Most people don't know there's a difference between a charter and a charter school. NYC has its full share of both charters and charter schools. There are 85

unwanted and unused charters still available to the NYS region but NYS families don't want more charters or charter schools. With NYC over-saturated, the regional boundaries must not be removed. In fact, if the existing charters are not needed in NYS and have been sitting idle for some time, those charters should be removed from the law altogether, not transferred to NYC."

**Kaliris Y. Salas-Ramirez, NYC Public school parent of two children**, said, ""Charter schools have become a mecca for corporations as they can receive public funds to open these schools with little to no oversight. As we are still supporting families through a pandemic, and we have seen that only when our schools have the financial means to help their students thrive, lifting the charter cap is the antithesis of what we should be doing. I am deeply disappointed that Governor Hochul doesn't understand the nuances of school privatization. Charter schools have historically harmed our children. The goal should be to fully invest in our public schools and commit to providing the children of NY a quality education."

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