

## **2021 Legislative and Policy Agenda: Protecting School Choice and Rewarding Innovation**

The 2021-2022 Pennsylvania Legislative Session begins as we approach yet another critical time in the lives of thousands of K-12 students throughout the Commonwealth. For the schoolchildren matriculating through our public education system, it is critical that they have options which best suit their needs, both now and for the rest of their lives. It is with this perspective that the Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools (PCPCS) advances its daily work, consistent with our vision: *“To serve as a catalyst for educational excellence through opportunity, innovation, and unity.”*

We advance a series of legislative goals, including those that are listed below. It is our goal to promote and successfully implement our work throughout public education in Pennsylvania by *“establishing working relationships with other education reform organizations, professional organizations and government agencies seeking to improve the quantity and quality of educational choices for parents.”*

**Streamlining and standardizing public charter school oversight that creates fairness and consistency for charter school operators, and support for charter authorizers. This includes:**

- Establishing a standard charter school application, and prohibiting charter school authorizers from demanding additional items that are both unnecessary and overly burdensome.
- Codifying a standard renewal and amendment process for charter schools, and a timeline for when charter authorizers (local school districts and the PA Department of Education) must act.
- Establishing regional, independent authorizers for PA’s public brick-and-mortar charter schools that incorporates local control, and unbiased community, business and higher education representatives.
- Requiring the governor to make timely nominations to the Charter Appeal Board (CAB) to ensure an effective and efficient governance.

**Ensuring fairness and equity for ALL of PA’s public school students. This includes:**

- Fighting against funding cuts for ALL public school students, both in school districts and charter schools.
- Advocating for an independent, bipartisan, bicameral funding commission spearheaded by the General Assembly to study all aspects of public charter school funding and collaborate on a plan for future funding that focuses on students and not institutions.
- Ensuring that EVERY student receives the full amount of their per-pupil allocations based on the formulas established in state law, by establishing a direct pay system for public charter schools from the PA Department of Education and providing facilities funding for charter schools.
- Fixing a major flaw in the PA School Code that does not allow public charter school students to take part in dual enrollment programs.
- Establishing a standard enrollment application for public charter school students.

**Strengthening accountability and rewarding innovation across PA's public education system. This includes:**

- Increasing accountability for charter school management organizations and codifying accountability measures that PA's public charter schools have already self-imposed.
- Leveraging the experience and expertise of PA's public charter schools to improve education for ALL students by allowing for public charter schools to be vendors.
- Ensuring the virtual education offerings available to PA's public education students are evaluated based on the same high standards. This can be achieved by calling on the PA Department of Education to collect and make publicly available the student achievement and financial data for virtual schools operating within school districts, like they report PA's cyber charter school data.
- Extending charter agreements for high-quality public charter schools so they can focus on what they do best...educating PA's most vulnerable students.

At the Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools (PCPCS), we believe that good public policy can be a foundation upon which the free will of parents to select the best public education options for their children can occur. With the proper support of school choice within public education – including successful public charter schools – Pennsylvania's leaders can open a gateway of opportunity and self-sufficiency for those that seek education equity, particularly those that are among the most vulnerable in the Commonwealth.