



MTF Report Examines MA Charter School Funding

Finds State Funding On Par With Student Enrollment

BOSTON, MA, September 28, 2016 — To help inform voters on the issues of charter schools, The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (MTF) today released ***Public Education Funding in Massachusetts: Putting Charter Schools in Context***, a report that explains public school funding and analyzes the impact of charter schools on the Commonwealth's school districts.

The report concludes that charter school funding is proportionate to charter school attendance, and that no predictable pattern connects charter school attendance with spending on traditional public schools.

“The research detailed in this report clarifies misconceptions regarding charter school funding and highlights that the 3.9 percent of education funds going to charter schools mirrors the 3.9 percent of students attending charter schools,” said MTF president Eileen McAnney. “Our hope is that this information helps put charter schools in the proper context of the state’s \$12.7 billion public education system.”

In addition, the report notes that charter schools are just one of several cases where students opt to attend a public school outside of their hometown, and that each of those cases operates on the same principal of funding following the student.

“Given that in a majority of school districts less than 1 percent of students attend charter schools, we chose to focus on the financial impact to districts with the most charter students.” McAnney added. “We found no evidence from our examination of aggregate funding levels over time of any systemic financial disadvantage to district school students.”

The first MA charter school, opened in 1995, and currently there are 71 charter schools in Massachusetts, serving just under 4 percent of the state’s public school students.

Key takeaways from the 25-page report include:

- ❖ *A cornerstone principle of the education reform law is that every student should receive an adequately financed education regardless of the resources available in the community in which they reside and that this money should follow the student to whichever public school the student chooses to attend.*
- ❖ *Charter schools, like regional vocational schools and School Choice, are one of a number of public school options available to students within the state’s \$12.67 billion school finance system.*



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- ❖ *Like other public schools, charter schools receive their funding based on the individual characteristics of attending students. Because of this, charter school funding is proportionate to the number of charter school students.*
- ❖ *In FY 2016, 3.9 percent of public students attended charter schools and 3.9 percent of public school funds went to charter schools.*
- ❖ *Charter school funding is unique in that the state is required to reimburse districts that send students to charter schools for a share of the funding associated with those students. As a result a student attending at a charter school can be more financially favorable to the sending district than other public school attendance options such as regional vocational schools or school choice.*
- ❖ *Charter schools are concentrated in low performing districts. More than 60 percent of charter school students come from just 10 school districts. For the vast majority of school districts in the Commonwealth, attendance at charter schools is low enough that that it has very little impact on the school budget.*
- ❖ *In the districts with the largest share of charter school students, charter school tuition has not had a predictable impact on the per-pupil spending for students who stay in the district. In some districts, non-charter school per-pupil spending has grown at a faster rate than charter student spending, while in other districts the reverse is true.*
- ❖ *In all cases, however, charter school spending in those districts has remained proportional to charter school enrollment and non-charter school spending has grown in spite of increased charter enrollment.*

For a full copy of the report, visit: www.masstaxpayers.org