

## Talking points: Charter Schools

- While a number of NYC charter schools have met the standard of improving achievement, many charter schools have failed miserably.
- Charter schools are financially devastating city school districts in Buffalo, Schenectady and Albany.
- The current process of establishing charter schools and the Governor's proposal to lift the cap, make no provisions for the long-held principle of local control. School district budgets are approved by community residents. Voters currently have no input into the establishment of charter schools that will be diverting funds already approved for traditional public schools. Applications or renewals of charters should be approved by the local school board before being received and acted on by any chartering entity.
- Charter schools drain students and finances from school districts.
- School districts need time to adjust and prepare for the opening of a charter school. A reasonable notice period should be required between the approval of a charter application and the opening of a charter school.
- Charter schools are financed by a formula based on a school district's prior year's annual operating expense (AOE). However, there are fixed costs that do not decrease when students attend charter schools, such as staffing, utilities, supplies and insurance. The formula should be revised to hold districts harmless for these fixed costs and reflect the difference between per pupil costs for K-8 (90%) and secondary (110%) students.
- School districts placed on a contingency budget may not increase their budget beyond the cap imposed by the state. However, districts must still pay the charter school at the prior year's AOE. This potentially forces the district to eliminate or reduce programs and services in traditional public schools. Contingency budget constraints should apply to funding that flows to charter schools, not only to funding that flows to traditional public Schools.
- Applying for Race to the Top federal grant monies without addressing the inherent inequities and funding problems within NYS's charter laws creates a situation of short-term benefit with the potential for long-term consequences.

### **Not all charter schools hold to the following NYS PTA beliefs that charter schools:**

- be open to all students, including students with limited English proficiency, students with special needs, and students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds,
- comply with federal and state laws governing public schools, including laws regarding teacher qualifications, testing standards, and fiscal accountability,
- adhere to federal, state, and local laws designed to ensure student health and safety,
- be accountable to local school boards in the districts where they are located,
- be funded in such a way as to preclude the charging of tuition or mandatory fees not charged by other public schools in the district,
- be independent of nonpublic, sectarian, religious, or home-based school affiliations, and
- include parents in meaningful decision-making roles.