

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Creating Greater Oversight of Charter Schools

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TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed two bills to modernize the Charter School Program Act of 1995, establishing new transparency requirements and creating greater State oversight of charter schools and their management organizations.

“Every child in New Jersey deserves to receive a high-quality education, and taxpayers deserve to know how public funds are being used. That is why the principles of transparency and accountability must apply to charter schools that receive State dollars, just as they do to our public education system,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Stronger oversight is necessary to ensure public funds are used responsibly and that students – not private interests – are the top priority. With today’s bill signings, we are setting a higher standard for charter schools operating in New Jersey and giving the State greater authority to hold them accountable to the communities they serve.”

“We appreciate the collaboration of the many individuals and diverse perspectives that came together to inform these updates that modernize the Charter School Program Act,” **said New Jersey Department of Education Kevin Dehmer**. “These bills strengthen the framework governing charter school operations, enhance accountability and transparency, while maintaining the innovative model that has long characterized New Jersey’s charter school communities.”

[A5935/S4716 \(https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/A6000/5935_R1.PDF\)](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/A6000/5935_R1.PDF) amends the Charter School Program Act of 1995 to impose new requirements pertaining to charter school admission, enrollment, reporting, and athletics. This includes:

- Prohibiting charter schools from using admissions criteria beyond a random lottery when demand exceeds seats;
- Requiring schools to coordinate better on student transitions by establishing a student placement liaison to assist with entries, exits, and enrollment tracking;
- Banning charter schools from counseling or advising students to withdraw;
- Mandating annual reporting of non-identifiable student exit data (dates, reasons, next placement) to the Commissioner of Education; and
- Requiring charter schools with sports to join a voluntary athletics association and follow its rules, setting eligibility conditions for non-resident athletes.

Additionally, [A5936/S4713 \(https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/A6000/5936_R1.PDF\)](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/A6000/5936_R1.PDF) amends the Charter School Program Act of 1995 by establishing various requirements for charter schools and strengthening State oversight. This includes:

- Increasing charter school oversight and transparency;

- Requiring public notice and access for charter applications, renewals, and major decisions;
- Mandating clear, public reporting of budgets, contracts, leadership salaries, and finances;
- Strengthening governance standards for charter boards and reinforcing Open Public Meetings rules;
- Expanding transparency and accountability for charter management organizations;
- Prohibiting for-profit entities from operating charter schools;
- Giving the Commissioner of Education stronger authority to review, place on probation, or revoke charters; and
- Ensuring charter schools are financially responsible and responsive to community needs.

Sponsors of the legislation include Senators Vin Gopal and Linda Greenstein, along with Assembly Members Luanne Peterpaul, Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, and Sterley Stanley.

“This charter school reform legislation establishes comprehensive requirements directly addressing the 30-year-old Charter School Program Act by imposing stricter governance standards as well as training and residency requirements for trustees,” **said Senator Vin Gopal**. “These bills add new and necessary requirements for increased transparency, accountability, and oversight of New Jersey’s charter schools in response to excessive executive compensation and financial mismanagement.”

“Charter schools are publicly funded, and with that special status comes a responsibility to operate with transparency and accountability to the communities they serve,” **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. “These bills will modernize the state’s outdated charter school law by strengthening oversight and closing the gaps that have allowed for financial abuse—reforms that will protect students, staff, and taxpayers.”

“With this legislation, we were able to bring together everyone to accomplish our most crucial goal: maintain the high level of education in New Jersey,” **said Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul**. “And importantly, this was a bipartisan effort, which highlights what we can accomplish when we work together. These bills take important steps to establish comprehensive accountability and transparency requirements for New Jersey Charter Schools, while also establishing extended renewals for high performing charter schools. This allows us to enhance oversight over the problematic actors, while rewarding the good actors.”

“As chair of the Assembly Education Committee, I know that nothing is more important than giving New Jersey’s children the best possible education. It is our responsibility to ensure that charter schools receiving public dollars operate with transparency and accountability,” **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. “These bills strengthen oversight and give the State the tools it needs to determine that those dollars are well spent, while supporting high-quality schools.”

“At a time when school funding and oversight are amongst the highest concerns of our constituents, I am incredibly proud to see this package of bills be signed by Governor Murphy. These bills ensure charter schools are held to clear and equitable standards of transparency and accountability,” **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. “Importantly, these bills will also establish parity in oversight of public dollars, ensuring they are held to similar standards as traditional public schools, so we can ensure charter schools remain fiscally sustainable and transparent institutions.”

“We applaud Governor Murphy and Legislative leaders for this smart new approach to charter school transparency and accountability,” **said NJEA President Steve Beatty**. “This law is the result of conversation, collaboration and common sense. NJEA has long pushed for reform like this and we were proud to lead the effort with fellow stakeholders, including the New Jersey Charter School Association, to achieve it.”

“For three decades, public charter schools have opened doors and expanded opportunities for students and families in some of our State’s most underserved communities,” **said Harry Lee, President and CEO of the New Jersey Public**

Charter Schools Association. "This legislation acknowledges the powerful impact charter schools have within our public education system. It thoughtfully balances stronger transparency and accountability with protecting the flexibility that drives charter success, including creating 10-year renewals for schools that consistently perform at a high level."

"We believe that these two bills affirm the ongoing role of charter schools in the New Jersey landscape by clarifying best practices and emphasizing fiscal and operational transparency," **said Elisabeth "Betsy" Ginsburg, Executive Director of the Garden State Coalition of Schools.**

"AFT New Jersey is pleased that perfection did not get in the way of progress with the passage of A5935/S4716, A5936/S4713. Regulating charter schools helps to even the proverbial playing field in education across the state," **said AFTNJ President Jennifer S. Higgins.** "With this legislation, New Jersey families who enroll their children in public charter schools will know how their tax dollars are being spent, the same as parents who put their children through our top-rated public schools. These new laws will go a long way in deterring misconduct in charters, financial as well as ethical."

"All public schools in New Jersey, including charter schools, should meet core learning, accountability, financial, operational, and transparency standards to best serve all public school students, families, and school communities. The NJ Principals and Supervisors Association appreciates the intensive collaborative efforts that resulted in the passage of this legislation, especially the unflagging leadership of Senator Vin Gopal, the bill sponsor," **said Debra Bradley, NJPSA Director of Government Relations.** "This legislation both updates and aligns the NJ Charter School Law to meet these goals and positively addresses the relationships between charter schools and their resident school districts through enhanced transparency, clarification of operational expectations and responsibilities, and the definition of rules concerning student athletics. NJPSA looks forward to working with our colleagues in the charter schools community to ensure that every New Jersey student receives a high-quality education no matter what public school they choose to attend."

Governor Phil Murphy

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