

## 2018 Policy Positions

Public charter schools in Arizona have experienced decades of autonomy supporting the creation of high-quality and diverse learning environments. Arizona's students have been the primary benefactor of this educational freedom, as school choice is now mainstream. Because of these policies, Arizona's public charter students have outperformed their peers for the past three years, topping state and national indicators of academic success.

The policy environment for Arizona's public charter sector needs to continue to cultivate innovation and opportunities for Arizona students. The 2018 Legislative Session will be a pivotal opportunity to promote and enact policies that support this healthy policy environment and defend against attacks on educational freedom.

The Arizona Charter Schools Association's 2018 Policy Positions reflect the values, principles and policy environment that allow Arizona's charter sector to continue to thrive and positively impact Arizona's students.

### FUNDING AND SCHOOL FINANCE EQUITY

Arizona is a robust school choice state where families have the option to choose from a variety of high-quality educational options. Although Arizona charter schools represent 30 percent of all public schools, Arizona's education funding structure is inconsistent with today's school choice policies. Families should not be penalized for their school choices due to an outdated and inequitable education finance system. We must modernize our education finance system to support the needs of all students in order to prepare an educated, vibrant work force and engaged community. Specifically, the Association continues to support initiatives to increase funding for what works in the classroom and for students.

### CHARTER SCHOOL GROWTH

Public charter schools have been an option for Arizona families for more than 20 years. With an estimated 185,900 students, charter students are now 17 percent of Arizona's public school students, a 6 percent increase over FY16. These figures are consistent with the trend that has continued for over a decade: families are demanding quality schools and Arizona's charter sector is responding. The Association will continue to promote and advocate for increased access to additional high-quality choices for all families, including in areas where there is little to no access to other education options.

### CHARTER SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND REGULATORY FREEDOM

The Association will continue to advocate for public charter school autonomy for high-quality schools or closure for failing schools, and work to eliminate the unnecessary legislative and regulatory actions that can set up barriers to innovation and growth of excellent schools. Charter schools have flourished as a direct result of the autonomy afforded by Arizona charter laws. While students have seen unprecedented academic gains with increased access to educational freedom, public charter school autonomy continues to see an onslaught of attacks. Some have suggested pilfering Arizona's education freedom by turning charter schools into clones of a bureaucratic system.



## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Arizona's public charter students have outperformed their peers for the past three years, topping state and national indicators of academic success. In fact, during that time, public charter students in all racial and ethnic groups outperformed the state average on AzMERIT for their group in math and English. These impressive results are significant and show public charter students of all backgrounds are receiving a quality education. The Association continues to support an academic accountability system that accurately and fairly reflects the student achievement of every public school. The Association advocates for the appropriate use of available data to minimize administrative burdens to schools and using student growth measures to accurately describe the impact of schools on student learning. A strong accountability framework must incorporate timely communication so educators can best support their students.

## REPORTING AND TRANSPARENCY

Arizona's charter schools are expected to provide students and families high-quality options or risk being closed. Because of this high-stakes environment, charters are allowed to operate in a way that cultivate innovation and incentivize efficiency. Charter schools are required to follow state and federal laws and file annual financial statements that are publically available. It is important not to put unnecessary reporting requirements on the charter sector, but instead inject elements of charter flexibility into other models of education.

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION

The Association supports the amplification of a strong and diverse network of community voices as a critical pillar of our advocacy platform. In preparation for the 2018 legislative session, the Association has developed a comprehensive grassroots Charter Advocacy campaign designed to engage the entire charter community to effectively communicate and support our charter schools.

In addition, the Association continues to receive regular input and feedback from our Charter Leaders Advisory Council, Board of Directors and school members through campus visits, regional meetings, events, newsletters and weekly legislative phone calls. We annually participate in a statewide Advocacy Tour with charter leaders to discuss our advocacy work and guide our upcoming legislative agenda.

Representing more than 80 percent of public charter schools, the Arizona Charter Schools Association is a nonprofit membership and professional organization that advocates and strengthens the autonomy, equity and quality of Arizona's diverse public charter schools. In a choice marketplace, Arizona's charter school parents are active and engaged consumers of education, providing a strong voice of the benefit of public charter schools.

Founded in 1995, the Association is dedicated to supporting Arizona's thriving public charter school sector. Since its inception, the Association has served as an innovative leader in transforming public education for Arizona's 1.1 million students. Driven by the belief that all Arizona students should have access to a high quality school of their choice, the Association is focused on creating and sharing innovative ideas designed to support leaders and teachers as they work to improve student achievement.