

SAVE OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SaveOurPublicSchoolsMA.com

Save Our Public Schools is a grassroots organization of Massachusetts families, parents, educators and students supported by the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, New England Area Conference of the NAACP, Jobs With Justice, Citizens for Public Schools, Massachusetts Teachers Association and American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO:

- Ensuring equal educational opportunity for every child;
- Increasing funding to provide high-quality public schools for all children;
- Protect local control over schools;
- Stopping the state from opening additional charter schools that will drain millions more from public education; and
- Less testing and more learning.



Save Our Public Schools was created to oppose the proposed ballot initiative to lift the charter school cap in Massachusetts. Our public schools cannot afford to lose vital funding while we are seeing programs cut and activities reduced.

SUMMARY OF BALLOT QUESTION TO RAISE THE CAP ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

- Each year the state could approve up to 12 new charter schools or expand existing charter schools, without the approval of local communities or their school committees.
- There is no limit to the number of charter schools that could open in a single community at the same time.
- The ballot question could take as much as \$100 million more in taxpayer money from Massachusetts public schools every single year.
- The ballot language gives priority to charter schools or expansion of existing charter schools where “demonstrated parent demand for additional public school options is greatest” but does not define how this demand will be determined.
- If the state receives fewer than 12 charter applications in a single year from “priority” districts, new charter schools could open in any community in the state, regardless of the district’s test scores, waitlist numbers, or the level of community support for charter schools.

WHY WE NEED TO KEEP THE CAP

Charter schools siphon funds from public schools

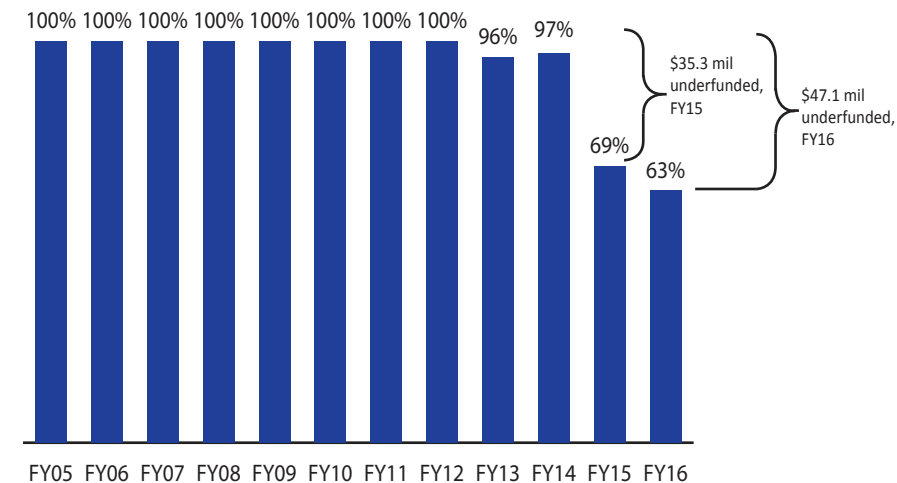
- According to preliminary Department of Elementary and Secondary Education analysis, charter schools will be diverting an estimated \$400 million in Chapter 70 funds (state funding for public schools) from the public schools in fiscal year 2016, even after reimbursement to sending districts is taken into account.
- Some districts, such as Boston and Holyoke, are losing as much as 12 percent of their school funds to charter schools, depriving public school students of needed services, supplies and enrichment programs.
- Under the ballot question being proposed, 12 new charter schools could be approved every single year, with no limit on how much money any one district could lose to these new charter schools. In short order, entire districts could be run by private charter operators.

Charter schools are not accountable to their local communities

- Local school districts have no say over whether a Commonwealth charter school is located in their communities. In Massachusetts, the state can — and often does — approve new charter schools over the strong objections of local elected officials and a majority of the local voters and taxpayers — the people who actually have to pay for the charter schools — who testify at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education charter hearings.
- The Supreme Court in the state of Washington struck down that state's charter law on Sept. 4, 2015, noting that charters are private entities operating schools using public taxpayer money with no oversight by locally elected school committees. The Massachusetts charter system is similarly undemocratic.

The State Has Not Fully Funded Charter Reimbursements in Recent Years

Percent of charter school reimbursements paid to sending district, based on reimbursement formula



Source: Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

Charter schools create a two-tiered system of public schools described by the national NAACP as “separate and unequal”

Commonwealth charter schools use enrollment practices that result in them serving fewer high-need students than the public schools. This enables them to make inflated claims of success without acknowledging they serve a different population.

- Even though charter schools are required by law to recruit and retain high-need students, studies show they fail to enroll as many English language learners, special needs students or economically disadvantaged students as their sending districts.

“The ballot question would take hundreds of millions more taxpayer money, creating a two-tier education system.” — Juan Cofield

President, New England NAACP

- Studies also show that many charter schools have high suspension rates that ultimately push out students, often for minor infractions.
- They also lose many students along the way and often do not take in new students to fill those slots despite claiming to have long waiting lists. A study of charter high schools in Boston showed that only 40 percent of those enrolled as freshmen made it to graduation, compared to 80 percent of those enrolled in the Boston Public Schools.

Rather than innovate, most charters focus on test prep

Charter schools were originally intended to serve as places for new ideas to emerge and then be shared. A state auditor's report concludes "DESE has not developed an effective process to ensure the dissemination and replication of charter school best practices to other Massachusetts public schools."

- Far from being innovative, many charters rely on direct instruction, a traditional form of education in which teachers follow a tightly scripted curriculum geared to increasing test scores among a compliant student population, not to encouraging inquiry.
- The tightly controlled atmosphere in charter schools may in part explain why charter school students struggle in college. According to a 2015 report by the Boston Opportunity

Agenda, students who graduated from the BPS had a greater chance of success in college, with 50 percent of BPS high school graduates — but only 42 percent of Boston charter high school graduates — obtaining a college degree within six years.

"The 27 Boston Public high schools are making tremendous progress on college completion."

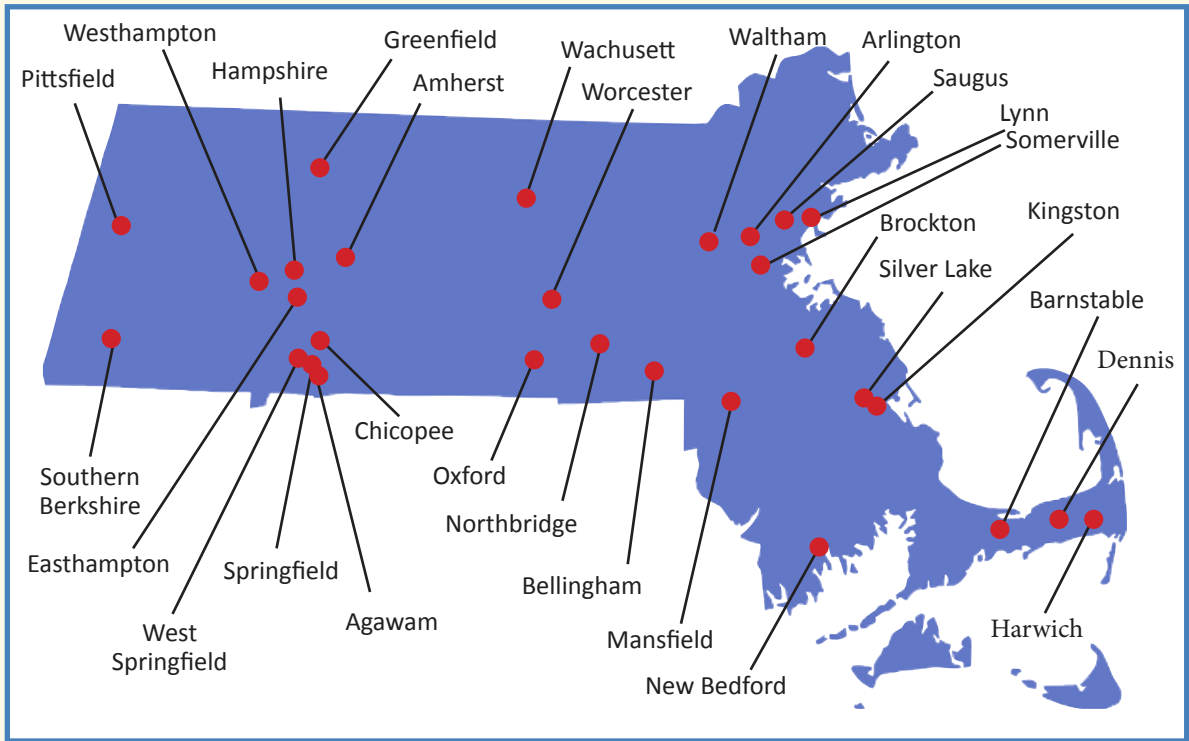
— Boston Opportunity Agenda
2015 Annual Report

Instead of sending money to privately run charters, we need to invest in our public schools.

- 16,000 young children are on waiting lists for early childhood education.
- We need to invest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education to create opportunity for all our children.
- *We should also focus on* enrichment programs and classes, including art, music, physical education, foreign languages and AP courses.

LOCAL RESOLUTIONS

Local authorities are beginning to take a position on the anticipated ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools. None have voted to support the ballot question. As of April 2016, those that are on record opposing lifting the cap on charter schools include:



Agawam School Committee
Amherst School Committee
Arlington School Committee
Barnstable School Committee
Bellingham School Committee
Brockton School Committee
Chicopee School Committee
Dennis School Committee
Easthampton City Council
Greenfield School Committee
Hampshire Regional School Committee
Kingston School Committee
Ludlow School Committee
Lynn City Council
Mansfield School Committee
Monomoy Regional School Committee

New Bedford School Committee
Northbridge School Committee
Oxford School Committee
Pittsfield School Committee
Saugus School Committee
Silver Lake Regional School Committee
Somerville School Committee
Springfield School Committee
Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Waltham School Committee
Wachusett Regional School Committee
Westhampton School Committee
West Springfield School Committee
Worcester City Council
Worcester School Committee

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