

Memorandum

Public Charter Schools Do Not Receive Facilities Funding

The only public schools with no access to facilities dollars!

Operating safe school buildings is a necessity for educating our state's children, especially while Connecticut continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, maintaining safe school facilities for students has become a critical issue for our state's public charter schools, as they are the **only public schools in the state that do not have access to facilities dollars**. Without facilities funding, public charter schools are forced to use their limited state funding that could be better used for instruction and programming for facilities instead. Ultimately, this funding crisis is shortchanging our state's over 11,000 public charter school students, as they not only do not have access to well-maintained, safe school buildings, which has cost them instructional days, but are also missing out on funding that could be going towards their education.

The following memorandum describes the impact this lack of facilities funding has on our state's public charter schools and CTCSA's proposed solutions.

Charters are the only public schools that do not receive facilities funding

- Our state's 21 public charter schools, which are located exclusively in alliance districts and serve over 11,000 children, nearly 94% of whom are Black and brown and 62% of whom come from low-income households, do not **receive facilities funding from the state**. This is unsustainable and has to change.

Previous Facilities Funding Opportunities for Public Charter Schools

- As stated above, public charter schools do not receive facilities funding from the state. Previously, the charter school bonding program provided public charter schools with an opportunity to access facilities dollars via a modest, competitively awarded grants for general improvements, debt repayments for school building projects.
- However, this program has since stalled, leaving public charter schools without any access to facilities funding. This is especially true for the schools that were awarded grants in 2018, as they have yet to receive the funding they were promised.
- In 2005, a pilot program was established to provide charter schools with access to funding for facilities. This pilot allowed public charter schools to apply for funds that could be used for the purchase and renovation of school facilities. Under this pilot program, the Commissioner of Education could select one school to receive state grant assistance; the school construction

committee would then be able to approve and allocate these funds. Shortly after being established, the pilot ended after awarding funds to just one charter school.

Impact on Kids

- Since public charter schools do not receive facilities funding, they are forced to use their limited state funding that could be better used for instruction and programming for facilities instead. Even worse, in the last year alone, facilities issues have forced several schools to close for days on end, losing critical instructional days. Additionally, one school is at risk of defaulting on their ADA compliance due to not receiving the bonding dollars they have been promised, as they have earmarked it for installing an elevator that a current student needs to access his education.
- Delaying facility improvements leads to more missed school days and larger expenses later on. This has already proven true for several public charter schools, whose facilities issues have only compounded as they lack the funding to address their needs. Charter schools are public schools and should have access to facilities funding like any other public school does. All students deserve access to safe, well-maintained school buildings - it is time that the state makes this possible by providing public charter schools access to facilities dollars.

CTCSA's Proposed Facilities Solution

- Without predictable access to facilities funding, schools often have to prioritize and back burner necessary renovations, maintenance and more. As such, school structures may not meet student or staff needs or be fully compliant.
- Charter schools are left out of many of the ways traditional schools receive facilities funding. Most recently, the clean air quality excluded charter schools from participating in applying. **This year, CTCSA is requesting an allocation of per pupil funding to each existing school in alignment with facilities funding expended by traditional public schools.** Based on national best practices:
 - Charter schools will receive a yearly amount of per pupil facilities funding in alignment with the expanded facilities funding allowed by traditional public schools based on the amount of students enrolled by Oct 1 of each year.
 - For each student enrolled, the charter school will receive an additional \$1,700* on top of the per pupil funding spent on educating the student
 - Charter schools will have an amount of funding in proportion to their student enrollment. Separate funding for facilities will enable charter schools to spend funding on education rather than additional projects needed to maintain school grounds. Charter schools will be able to budget the needs of students despite unforeseen emergencies.

*This amount is based on the state average of facilities funding spent on traditional public schools.