

ALASKA

(Law passed in 1995; 7th weakest of the nation's 43 charter laws)

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Alaska's charter school law is considered weak because only the state board of education can authorize charter schools and only after seeking prior approval from the local boards. In addition, the strong regulatory environment stifles charter school autonomy and innovation making it very difficult for charters to open, thrive and serve the diverse student population in the Last Frontier.

INDEPENDENT OR MULTIPLE AUTHORIZERS - NO

APPROVAL	The State Board of Education and Early Development authorizes the applicant following school board approval.
APPEAL	The applicant may appeal a school board denial to the commissioner of education. The commissioner can remand the appeal back to the school board for review, approve the application and forward to the state board for final approval, or uphold the school board's denial. If the denial is upheld, the applicant can appeal directly to the state board.

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY

STATE	No. Charters are exempt from only a small number of relatively insignificant regulations and are considered part of the local district. Virtual schools are allowed. The law is vague regarding education service provider (ESP) contracts, but they are not restricted in any way.
LOCAL	No. A charter operates as a school in the local district, except for a few exemptions including textbooks, curriculum, and some personnel policies. Additional exemptions can be specified in the contract between the charter school and authorizer. All operational and funding decisions are subject to district terms.
TEACHER FREEDOM	No. Teachers are covered by the district bargaining agreement unless an exemption is approved. Charter schools must participate in state's retirement system.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ALLOWED

CAP	There is no legal limit on the number of schools that may be approved.
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EQUITY

STUDENT FUNDING	<p>Funds pass through the district to the charter school. The school board provides the charter with its annual budget that must be equal to the amount generated by per-pupil revenue, deducts any operational expenses and sets its own administrative costs up to four percent. The per-pupil revenue for charter students is determined in the same way as for traditional public schools and includes local and district funds, grants and federal impact aid.</p> <p>“(a) A local school board shall provide an approved charter school with an annual program budget. The budget shall be not less than the amount generated by the students enrolled in the charter school less administrative costs retained by the local school district, determined by applying the indirect cost rate approved by the department up to four percent.... The “amount generated by students enrolled in the charter school” is to be determined in the same manner as it would be for a student enrolled in another public school in that school district and includes funds generated by grants, appropriations, federal impact aid, the required local contribution, the local contribution [AK Stat. § 14.03.260]</p>
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ALASKA

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FACILITIES FUNDS	Charter schools are eligible to access tax-exempt financing through the Alaska Municipal Bond Bank Authority. A school district must direct state aid to charters for construction or maintenance of a charter facility, subject to the same terms and conditions that apply to state aid for traditional public schools. [AK Stat. §14.03.260]
IMPLEMENTATION POINTS	
-3	Three points are deducted because the state has imposed a de facto cap by neither encouraging nor approving charter applications.

[LINK TO THE ALASKA CHARTER SCHOOL LAW](#)