

ARIZONA

(Law passed in 1994; 5th strongest of the nation's 43 charter laws)



Arizona has a strong charter school law featuring all of the major components of a high-quality charter law. The Arizona law provides for a variety of independent authorizers, including the state board and universities, automatic waivers giving charters freedom from most rules and regulations, and financial assistance for charter facilities. However, charter leaders are beginning to see an increase in bureaucratic requirements imposed by the state, and in 2014, school districts had their authorizing power stripped.

INDEPENDENT OR MULTIPLE AUTHORIZERS - YES (3)

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| APPROVAL | The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS) is an independent board and public universities, community colleges or a group of community colleges with at least 15,000 students enrolled are eligible authorizers. The State Department of Education may approve applications, but has chosen not to since 2003 and the ASBCS has acted as the authorizer of any schools that were approved by them. In the 2014 budget, a moratorium was placed on district-authorized schools retroactive to 2013. |
| APPEAL | None. The only recourse is to revise and re-submit the charter application for reconsideration. |

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY

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| STATE | Yes, charters receive a blanket waiver from most rules and regulations governing traditional public schools. Increased bureaucratic requirements have been imposed by the state, and by some authorizers, such as the ASBCS. Virtual schools are allowed. The law is silent regarding any regulations around education service providers' contracts. The ASBCS does require applicants applying to them to detail their potential relationship with an ESP. |
| LOCAL | Yes, the law states that charters are fiscally and legally autonomous schools under their charter board and they receive exemptions from school district rules. |
| TEACHER FREEDOM | Yes. Charters are their own legal entity and may work independently of district contract work rules. Charter schools have the option to participate in the state's retirement system. |

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ALLOWED

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| CAP | No legal limit on number of schools that may be approved. |
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EQUITY

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| <p>STUDENT FUNDING</p> | <p>For charters authorized by school boards, funds pass through the district. For all others, funds pass through the state. The law calculates a base support level for charter schools, and provides equal access to all applicable categorical federal and state funding. Inequitable funding, largely due to a lack of facilities funding and federal funding disparities, has resulted in various lawsuits throughout the years.</p> <p>“A. Financial provisions for a charter school that is sponsored by a school district governing board are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The charter school shall be included in the district’s budget and financial assistance calculations pursuant to paragraph 3 of this subsection and chapter 9 of this title, except for chapter 9, article 4 of this title. The charter of the charter school shall include a description of the methods of funding the charter school by the school district. The school district shall send a copy of the charter and application, including a description of how the school district plans to fund the school, to the state board of education before the start of the first fiscal year of operation of the charter school. The charter or application shall include an estimate of the student count for the charter school for its first fiscal year of operation. This estimate shall be computed pursuant to the requirements of paragraph 3 of this subsection. <p>B. Financial provisions for a charter school that is sponsored by the state board of education, the state board for charter schools, a university, a community college district or a group of community college districts are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The charter school shall calculate a base support level as prescribed in section 15-943, except that section 15-941 does not apply to these charter schools. 2. Notwithstanding paragraph 1 of this subsection, the student count shall be determined initially using an estimated student count based on actual registration of pupils before the beginning of the school year. Notwithstanding section 15-1042, subsection F, student level data submitted to the department may be used to determine estimated student counts.” [AZ Stat. 15-185(A) to (B)] |
| <p>FACILITIES FUNDS</p> | <p>Yes. Charter schools receive additional assistance to help with facilities and other overhead costs. Charters receive \$1,707 per pupil for students in K-8 and \$1,990 per pupil for students in grades 9-12. [AZ Stat. 15-185(B)4]</p> |

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