

GEORGIA

(Law passed in 1993; 17th strongest of the nation's 43 charter laws)



Without the addition of true independent authorizers, problems remain with districts often rejecting applications without justification. Funding continues to be a major concern especially for online charters receiving significantly less funding per pupil. Facilities funding has improved, with charters receiving per-pupil funds and the state has instituted a competitive grant program as well.

INDEPENDENT OR MULTIPLE AUTHORIZERS - YES (3)

APPROVAL	School boards, the state board of education and the Georgia Charter Schools Commission, a quasi-independent authority, can all serve as authorizers. The commission may give a charter to schools with a statewide attendance zone or a defined attendance zone, only if it demonstrates it has special characteristics. The State Board of Education may also approve districts to become a charter system.
APPEAL	Yes. The State Board of Education may approve a charter application on appeal after the school board has denied it. If a charter is approved on appeal, it becomes a "state-chartered special school".

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY

STATE	Yes. Charters can receive a blanket waiver from most state rules and regulations governing traditional public schools but they must request it in exchange for accountability promises, or they can negotiate individual waivers. Virtual schools are allowed. Management contracts with ESPs are not restricted, although within the charter application additional information including disclosing potential conflicts of interest is required.
LOCAL	Charter schools may be exempt from some district rules and regulations. However, districts subject locally-sponsored charters to extensive control and oversight. State-sponsored charters are considered their own LEAs giving them more freedom than locally-sponsored charters.
TEACHER FREEDOM	Yes. Teachers are exempt from any district collective bargaining agreements. All charters are required to participate in state retirement system.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ALLOWED

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

<p>STUDENT FUNDING</p>	<p>For district charters, funds pass through the district. For all other schools, funds pass through the state. The law states that charter schools should be treated “no less favorably” than conventional district schools in regards to funding for instruction, administration, transportation and food services. The state’s basic funding formula (QBE) applies to all charters. School districts negotiate funding with locally-approved charter schools, resulting in inequities. State-chartered special schools receive only state and federal funds, not local. All authorizers may deduct up to three percent of charter funding for administrative fees.</p> <p>Quality basic education formula applies; grants, local tax revenue, and funds from local bonds. “(a) A local charter school shall be included in the allotment of QBE formula earnings, applicable QBE grants, applicable non-QBE state grants, and applicable federal grants to the local school system in which the local charter school is located under Article 6 of this chapter. The local board and the state board shall treat a conversion charter school no less favorably than other local schools located within the applicable local school system unless otherwise provided by law. The local board and the state board shall treat a start-up charter school no less favorably than other local schools within the applicable local system with respect to the provision of funds for instruction, school administration, transportation, food services, and, where feasible, building programs.” [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.1]</p>
<p>FACILITIES FUNDS</p>	<p>State charters and state-chartered special schools receive approximately \$1,100 per pupil for capital expenses, although this is dependent on appropriations.</p> <p>There is a competitive need-based per-pupil facilities grant program, and individual annual awards range from \$20,000 to \$280,000 per school. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.2. See also, Georgia’s RTTT application, available at: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/georgia.pdf</p>

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

<p>- 1</p>	<p>One point was deducted because of the ongoing reluctance of school districts to review, approve and support charter schools.</p>
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LINK TO THE GEORGIA
CHARTER SCHOOL
LAW