

RHODE ISLAND

(Law passed in 1995; 11th weakest of the nation's 43 charter laws)



Rhode Island has a very weak charter law across the board. Only the state can approve charter schools, there is a cap on the number of charters that can be opened, and charters that do open are given little freedom to determine how to operate or to manage their teachers.

INDEPENDENT OR MULTIPLE AUTHORIZERS - NO

APPROVAL	The State Board of Regents is the sole authorizer in the state, after the local school committee has approved the charter or the state Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. There are three types of charter schools: independent charters (those first approved by the commissioner), district charters (those first approved by local school committee) and mayoral academies.
APPEAL	None

OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY

STATE	No. Waiver requests from state rules and regulations are considered on a case-by-case basis. Virtual schools are not allowed. Contracts or ESP partnerships are limited to nonprofit companies and charters can only contract with them for specific services such as book purchasing, materials and other goods and services not provided by the district. Charter schools must disclose past academic success, conflicts of interest, compensation and evaluation measures with the chosen ESP in their application.
LOCAL	No. Waiver requests from district rules are considered on a case-by-case basis, and district schools have the least amount of freedoms. Fiscal autonomy is subject to district terms. Mayoral academies have more freedoms than other charter schools regarding personnel.
TEACHER FREEDOM	Limited. District charter schools are bound by district collective bargaining agreements unless variances are approved. Independent charters and mayoral academies are exempt from district bargaining agreements, although they must identify these exemptions in their application. Mayoral academy employees are the only teachers that are exempt from mandatory participation in retirement system.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ALLOWED

CAP	Yes. 35 charters are allowed in the state and half must be reserved for at-risk students.
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RHODE ISLAND

(Continued)

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EQUITY

STUDENT FUNDING

Funds pass through the district and state. The weighted student formula, which began in the 2011-12 school year uses the same funding formula as conventional schools, and is supposed to fund charters at 100 percent of traditional public school funding by the end of the seven-year policy rollout. Local monies will come direct from the district. State deducts five percent from the state revenue formula and gives that money to the school district as impact aid.

“It is the intent of the general assembly that funding pursuant to this chapter shall be neither a financial incentive nor a financial disincentive to the establishment of an independent charter school. Funding for each independent charter school shall consist of state revenue and municipal or district revenue in the same proportions that funding is provided for other schools within the sending school district(s). (b) The amount of funding which shall be allocated to the independent charter school by the sending school district(s) shall be equal to a percentage of the total budgeted expenses of the sending school district(s) which is determined by dividing the number of students enrolled in the district charter school by the total resident average daily number of students in the sending school district(s). R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. § 16-77.3-5 (West).

FACILITIES FUNDS

Charter schools not sponsored by a school district may apply for a 30 percent reimbursement of school housing costs from the state. R.I. Gen. Laws Ann. § 16-77.1-5 (West).

[LINK TO THE RHODE ISLAND CHARTER SCHOOL LAW](#)