

Charter Policy Issue Brief

State public school capital funding programs



This document examines state policies for public school capital funding programs established to support facility needs within the state's K–12 system. Many states offer grant programs supporting public school facility needs funded by various mechanisms, including both regular and irregular appropriations, unique revenue streams, and state bonds, whether approved by legislation or voter approval. State public school capital funding programs also involve a wide variety of mechanisms distributing the dollars, including competitive grants, categorical programs and per-pupil supplements to district funds.

This document is divided into two sections: The first one focuses on a table that presents a variety of details about each state's policies for public school capital funding programs; the second section outlines some policy considerations for state policymakers and advocates to wrestle with when designing a public school capital funding program that includes charter schools.

Section I: State policies for state public school capital funding programs table

As of this writing, 37 states and the District of Columbia have created state public school capital funding programs. Twenty-three of these states have provided funding to charter schools via these programs. The table below presents various details about each state's policies for state public school capital funding programs. The states are listed in order of a gap measure that is the difference between the percentage of state public school capital funding for charter schools and the percentage of a state's public school students that are enrolled in charter schools. The states where charter schools have not accessed state public school capital funding programs (0% funding) are at the bottom of the table, regardless of the gap measure. The text box after the table provides more information about what each column of the table represents.

State	Gap measure	Total state funding	Charter portion of state funding	Percentage of funding for charter schools ¹	Percentage of public school students in charter schools enrollment	Charter school annual average	Years of funding data available	Charter schools explicitly included ²	Recurring ³
Oklahoma	4.92	\$35,461,135.25	\$4,787,768.42	13.50%	8.60%	\$2,393,884.21	2	Y	A
Tennessee ⁴	0	–	–	4.40%	4.40%	–	–	Y	A
Alabama	-0.03	\$912,525,000	\$3,909,449.02	0.43%	0.50%	\$3,909,449.02	1	Y	O
Virginia	-0.09	\$4,941,674,083	\$604,400	0.01%	0.10%	\$100,733.33	6	NM	A
Washington	-0.43	\$2,924,455,667.47	\$7,256	0.00%	0.43%	\$806.22	9	L	A
Illinois	-0.54	\$8,101,325,937	\$224,631,908	2.77%	3.30%	\$22,463,190.80	10	Y	A
Wyoming	-0.58	\$6,555,103,317.97	\$7,184,026.68	0.10%	0.70%	\$1,436,805.34	5	L	A
Minnesota	-0.65	\$655,734,700.07	\$46,596,700.07	7.10%	7.80%	\$7,766,116.68	6	Y	A

Maine	-0.7	\$3,407,728,967	\$31,301,395	0.92%	1.60%	\$3,130,139.50	10	NM	A
New Hampshire	-2.83	\$739,422,993.33	\$833,538.13	0.11%	2.90%	\$49,031.65	17	L	A
Rhode Island	-5.04	\$358,153,211	\$11,789,835	3.29%	8.30%	\$1,473,729.38	8	Y	A
Ohio	-5.48	\$623,641,505	\$7,542,784	1.21%	6.70%	\$3,771,392	2	NM	A
Pennsylvania	-5.71	\$2,108,274,811	\$80,000,000	3.79%	9.50%	\$10,000,000	8	Y	A
Idaho	-5.81	\$431,891,844.87	\$14,866,913	3.44%	9.30%	\$1,486,691.30	10	L	A
Texas	-5.85	\$3,251,011,751	\$76,126,280	2.34%	8.20%	\$5,855,867.69	13	Y	A
Hawaii	-6.04	\$520,415,213.23	\$5,241,963.02	1.01%	7%	\$1,048,392.60	5	Y	A
California	-7.69	\$105,233,103,404.20	\$1,598,179,677.55	1.52%	9.20%	\$63,927,187.10	25	Y	O
Arkansas	-7.75	\$1,656,597,152.89	\$15,801,029.91	0.95%	8.70%	\$1,755,669.99	9	Y	A
New Mexico	-8.03	\$1,439,098,679.55	\$22,404,393.98	1.56%	9.60%	\$1,493,626.27	15	Y	A
Colorado	-8.48	\$2,324,573,628.44	\$160,115,756.28	6.89%	15.40%	\$10,674,383.75	15	Y	A
Delaware	-10.17	\$993,846,274	\$14,302,947	1.44%	11.60%	\$2,383,824.50	6	Y	A
Michigan	-10.2	\$558,764,682	\$3,136,149	0.60%	10.80%	\$1,568,074.50	2	L	A
Florida	-12.4	\$7,826,734,599	\$29,822,966.75	0.38%	12.80%	\$1,192,918.67	25	Y	A
Iowa	–	\$5,431,284,329.96	\$0	0%	0.03%	\$0	12	NM	A
Mississippi	–	\$96,000,001	\$0	0%	0.70%	\$0	6	NM	A
Connecticut	–	\$4,648,610,767	\$0	0%	2.20%	\$0	14	Y	A
Maryland	–	\$6,494,458,338	\$0	0%	2.70%	\$0	21	Y	A
Georgia ⁵	–	\$156,315,000	\$0	0%	4.10%	\$0	7	NM	A
New Jersey	–	\$3,950,000,000	\$0	0%	4.40%	\$0	3	E	A
Massachusetts	–	\$6,394,865,138	\$0	0%	5.30%	\$0	16	E	A
Alaska	–	\$863,302,441	\$0	0%	5.80%	\$0	13	NM	A
South Carolina	–	\$55,828,859	\$0	0%	6.30%	\$0	1	NM	O
New York	–	\$21,430,610,000	\$0	0%	6.90%	\$0	7	NM	A
Oregon	–	\$426,129,831.93	\$0	0%	7.80%	\$0	8	E	A
North Carolina	–	\$1,671,916,803	\$0	0%	8.60%	\$0	15	E	A
Utah	–	\$328,952,100	\$0	0%	11.50%	\$0	13	NM	A
Arizona	–	\$5,096,968,700	\$0	0%	20.40%	\$0	21	NM	A
District of Columbia	–	\$3,719,612,501	\$0	0%	47.40%	\$0	10	NM	A

1. Yellow highlight shows the states that have not accessed funding from the state public school capital grant programs.
2. Y = yes (green); L = limited inclusion (gray); NM = not mentioned (orange); E = explicitly excluded (yellow).
3. A = annual (blue); O = occasional (purple).
4. Tennessee's former per-pupil funding mechanism contained a component called "Capital Outlay." It was the same for both district and charter schools. While the data is not available for how much the total component came to, in theory, the charter schools should have received their proportionate share based on per-pupil funding. There is a new method for calculating per-pupil funding so the state will not be rated here, as the adjustments have been accounted for elsewhere.
5. Detailed information regarding which Georgia schools received this funding was not available, and given that charter schools are not mentioned in the information, we assumed no charter schools have received any of this funding.

State policies for state public school capital funding programs table column descriptions

Gap measure: The difference between the percentage of state public school capital funding for charter schools and the percentage of a state's public school students that are enrolled in charter schools, used to determine if charter schools are getting their share of the funding.

Total state funding: The total funding provided by state programs.

Charter portion of state funding: The total funding provided to charter schools by state programs.

Percentage of funding for charter schools: The percentage of the total amount of state funding that has gone to the state's charter schools.

Percentage of public school enrollment in charter schools: The percentage of public school enrollment that is in charter schools.

Charter school annual average: The average annual amount of funding that charter schools receive from the program.

Years of funding data available: How many years of data are available for each state (often a proxy for how long the program has been around), recognizing data in some cases remains inaccessible.

Charter schools explicitly included: Whether charter schools are explicitly included and eligible for the state program.

Recurring: Is the program a one-time or irregularly funded effort or a regularly recurring effort?

Section II: Policy considerations

A wide variety of states have public school capital funding programs that provide funding for schools and districts where the current facilities and the local tax base are substandard to provide suitable facilities for public school students. As the state of charter school facilities, including an inaccessible local tax base, can closely resemble the plight of district-run schools, there is a logical connection between these programs and charter school facility needs.

Several state statutes specifically include charter schools as eligible for state public school capital funding programs. A subset of these states, however, has no record of charter schools receiving funding even when they are eligible, suggesting something is not working.

Not all the state programs are equally applicable to a state's charter school community, as several are relatively specialized or time limited. Identifying charter schools as eligible recipients of state program funding improves the odds of charter schools being funded. Charter schools are even more likely to be funded when the eligibility criteria are written to effectively include charter schools.