



*A Union of Professionals*

## **Every Student Succeeds Act**

A New Day in Public Education

### **Charter Schools in ESSA**

Charter schools have been part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since 1994. The Every Student Succeeds Act expands current law by improving accountability throughout the authorization process.

The AFT worked to secure language to ensure charters are educating the same populations as traditional public schools; to strengthen the standards that charters need to meet, with a focus on fiscal oversight; and to increase parental involvement to help ensure charter schools are locally grown and not forced on communities.

More specifically, the ESSA charter school language specifically supports:

- Efforts to strengthen the charter school authorizing process to improve performance management, including transparency, oversight and monitoring (including financial audits), and evaluation of such schools.
- Improving quality, accountability and transparency in the operational performance of public chartering agencies, including states, districts and other authorizing entities.
- Eligibility for state grants under ESSA requires:
- Charters to meet the needs of students served under such programs, including students with disabilities and English learners.
- That authorized public chartering agencies, in collaboration with districts (where applicable), establish clear plans and procedures to assist students enrolled in a charter school that closes or loses its charter to attend other high-quality schools.

States to work with charter schools on:

- Recruitment and enrollment practices to promote inclusion of all students, including by eliminating any barriers to enrollment for educationally disadvantaged students (e.g., foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth).

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The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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- Supporting all students, once they are enrolled, to promote retention, including by reducing the use of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom.

States will also be required to ensure better oversight for federally funded charters by:

- Establishing authorizing standards, which may include approving, monitoring and re-approving or revoking the authority of an authorized public chartering agency based on charter schools' performance in the areas of student achievement, student safety, financial and operational management, and compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations.
- Requiring a description of the quality controls agreed to between the eligible applicant and the authorized public chartering agency involved, such as a contract or performance agreement, a school's performance in the state's accountability system, and a school's impact on student achievement (which may include student academic growth).
- Describing a state's right to revoke or not renew a school's charter based on financial, structural or operational factors involving the management of the school.
- Demonstrating how the charter will solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community.

Additionally, states will be required to assure that they will:

- Adequately monitor each charter school in recruiting, enrolling, retaining and meeting the needs of all students, including children with disabilities and English learners.
- Promote quality authorizing, consistent with state law, such as by providing technical assistance including:
  - Assessing annual performance data of the schools, including, as appropriate, graduation rates, student academic growth and rates of student attrition.
  - Reviewing the schools' independent, annual audits of financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and ensuring that any such audits are publicly reported.
  - Holding charter schools accountable to the academic, financial and operational quality controls agreed to between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency involved, such as through renewal, nonrenewal or revocation of the school's charter.