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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Cyber & Charter School Reform

Monday, May 8, 2023 | 3:00 p.m.

Representative Tarah Probst

3:00 p.m. Welcome and member introductions

3:05 p.m. Dr. Cosmas Curry, Superintendent
Stroudsburg Area School District

Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent
Pocono Mountain School District

Dr. Brian Blaum, Superintendent
Delaware Valley School District

3:45 p.m. Susan Spicka, Executive Director
Education Voters of Pennsylvania

4:15 p.m. Meryln Clark, Retired Professor

Patricia Griffin, Taxpayer
Q & A with Legislators

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**POCONO MOUNTAIN
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Testimony of Pocono Mountain School District
By Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools**

**Public Hearing Regarding
Cyber Charter School Costs and Funding**

**Presented to the PA House Democratic Policy Committee
May 8, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairman Bizzarro, Vice Chairman Isaacson, Representative Probst and members of the House Democratic Policy Committee. I am Dr. Elizabeth Robison, the Superintendent of School for Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD). I want to thank the House Democratic Policy Committee for inviting me to share my experiences and perspective, and the experiences of my school district, Pocono Mountain School District, on the issue of Cyber Charter School Costs, Funding and Reform. Thank you for hosting this important discussion.

Each year, public educators across the Commonwealth call upon our legislators to revise and reform the PA Charter School Law. Each year, those pleas go unanswered. Hopefully, this year will be different. The need for reform is especially urgent now, because cyber charter enrollment jumped by 59% during the 2020-21 school year, putting intense pressure on school districts to raise property taxes or make other programmatic cuts to the programs they offer students enrolled in district schools just to cover the ever increasing cost of cyber tuition.

As the Superintendent of the most diverse and largest school district in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, I understand the desire of parents to have educational choices and input into their children's education. I have spoken and met with many charter and cyber charter school parents since the PA Charter School Law was enacted, because the reality is when parents have a concern about their children's education they almost always go back to their home school district for help.

I believe school choice is here to stay and, when carefully designed and managed by the state, can provide high-quality educational opportunities for students that compliment and expand upon the state's other public school offerings. Unfortunately, what started out as very good intentions with the

enactment of the PA Charter School Law has evolved to the point where Pennsylvania now has two competing and almost entirely separate and parallel public school systems with different accountability expectations and measurements; with competing, not complementary interests; and two systems that are heavily influenced by lobbying groups. What started out as a way to reform and improve public education and create a more cost-effective educational system for taxpayers has created increased educational costs, and in many cases exploding, unsustainable costs for local taxpayers. More alarming is independent research studies on the effectiveness of cyber charter schools does not support the notion that they have led to anticipated reform or improvement of public education outcomes for students, in fact research shows the opposite is true.

District Cyber Charter School Costs & State Funding:

The argument regarding cyber school funding is always that the educational funds received from the state and from property taxes paid by parents to fund schools should follow the student. That argument makes sense when everything is equal, but everything is not equal in how the state funds schools. State funding for Pocono Mountain is on average between 26 percent to 35 percent annually, while many other school districts in PA are funded at much higher rates by the state where up to around 70 percent of their budget comes from state funding. So, Pocono Mountain School District taxpayers bear a disproportionate burden than many other property owners across the state when it comes to supporting their local school district. This local taxpayer burden is only exasperated by the fact that cyber charter school tuition rates are based on school district budgets and not the actual operating schools of the charters. This means there are different cyber charter school tuition rates for each school district, with Pocono Mountain taxpayers paying very high charter school tuition rates while the educational

services provided to our students by the cyber and charter schools is the same as for districts paying much less.

In 2021-22 Pocono Mountain School District paid more than \$6.3 million dollars in cyber charter tuition. Our cyber charter school tuition rates for this school year are \$15,731.31 per regular education student and \$37,829.68 per special education student regardless of the services provided to those students by the cyber charter schools. These tuition rates, which increase annually based on the district's expenditures and budget, not the actual costs of educating students at the cyber charter school, are not sustainable for very much longer for our district without forcing large property tax increases on our school community or substantial reduction of educational opportunities students attending Pocono Mountain School District schools.

When you look at the cumulative effects overtime of the costs to school districts for state mandates, such as charter school tuition, the bulk of which for Pocono Mountain is cyber charter school tuition fees, and state funding for charter school tuition reimbursement, you can see that we are operating at a great deficit of funding for costs that we cannot control or even accurately project for the next year as the COVID-19 pandemic showed us.

For my school district, the cumulative dollar changes in state funding from 2010-11 to 2020-21 for charter school tuition reimbursement is a negative \$1,661,234.78. That is a negative, not a gain. The cumulative change in mandated costs from that same timeframe, 2010-11 to 2020-21, was an increase in expenses for charter school tuition of \$8,265,206. This deficit in state funding and increase in costs for cyber charter and charter tuition is paid for by our local property owners.

Cumulative Dollar Change in State Funding (2010-11 to 2020-21)	\$ 22,190,748.00
Cumulative Change in Mandated Costs (2010-11 to 2020-21)	\$ 38,267,006.00
Mandated Costs Deficit after State Funding (Mandated Cost increases) – (State Funding Increases) *Local Burden from Mandates	\$ 16,076,258.00

Component Chart:

Cumulative Dollar Change in State Funding (2010-11 to 2020-21)		Cumulative Change in Mandated Costs (2010-11 to 2020-21)	
Rev: Pension Reimbursement	\$ 13,220,088.00	Exp: Total Pension Costs	\$ 23,402,327.00
Rev: Charter Tuition Reimbursement	-\$ 1,661,234.78	Exp: Charter Tuition Costs	\$ 8,265,206.00
Rev. Special Education Funding	\$ 953,282.00	Exp. Adjusted Special Education Costs*	\$ 6,599,473.00
Rev. Basic Education Funding	\$ 9,678,613.00		
Total Change - State Funding	\$ 22,190,748.22	Total Change - Mandated Costs	\$ 38,267,006.00

Important Research Findings:

In A Children First Education Report entitled “The PA Disconnect in Cyber Charter Oversight and Funding – A review of Cyber Charter Laws in 27 States, January 2022,” the researchers found that performance data on PA cyber charter schools shows that “every one of Pennsylvania’s 14 charter schools has been identified as needing some level of support and improvement under the state’s accountability system.”

More concerning, this recent study highlights that the “Pennsylvania Association of State Business Officials (PASBO) estimate that cyber charter schools received \$980 million dollars in taxpayer-funded tuition payments in 2020-2021. This amount is more than three times the increase in basic education funding that the legislature appropriated for all 500 school districts.”

The study further shows that in a review of 27 states with cyber charter school, Pennsylvania stands out in ways that are not positive:

- Most states elect to fund cyber charter schools at the state level, while cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania are funded by the local school districts.
- “Taxpayers in different jurisdictions pay vastly different tuition rates for the same educational services. This price inequality is built in the current system and creates incentives to advertise and recruit in districts with higher tuition rates.”
- “The funding formula builds the impact of rising charter tuition payments into future tuition bills. Because there is no exemption for charter school tuition payments, the tuition expense paid by school districts becomes part of their financial base in subsequent years, fueling higher tuition rates and compounding costs paid by local taxpayers.”
- “No other state uses a methodology that mirrors or even closely resembles PA’s approach, which has been unchanged since it was enacted in 2002.”

Conclusion - Cyber Charter Reform Recommendations:

When Pennsylvania began approving cyber charter schools, school districts did not have cyber programs. Now that 90 percent of PA school districts offer online educational programs, it's time for the state to reassess why district taxpayers are being asked to pay for two parallel and redundant systems for online learning.

- Cyber School tuition rates should be aligned to the actual costs of providing the cyber education for its students, not the school district’s finances.
- Our legislature should reform the PA Charter School Law to establish a fair, uniform, statewide cyber tuition rate. There is no rational reason

why taxpayers in one school district should be expected to pay more than twice as much as taxpayers in another district for the exact same educational services provided by a cyber charter school.

- Reform should include ensuring cyber charter schools undergo the same financial audits as brick and mortar charter schools and traditional public schools to ensure accountability and fiscal responsibility to Commonwealth taxpayers.

If our legislators are truly concerned with improving the quality of public education for all students throughout Pennsylvania, I would call upon them to enact meaningful cyber charter school legislation reform. Any improvement has to start with an open and honest discussion on how to create a system where educational, accountability and funding measures are fairly and equitably applied to all public schools, traditional and cyber charter, across the state.

Thank you again for your time Chairman Bizzarro, Vice Chairman Isaacson, Representative Probst, other members of the House Majority Policy Committee and guests.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools

Testimony of Susan Spicka, Executive Director, Education Voters of PA
Cyber / Charter Thievery policy hearing
May 8th , 2023
Stroudsburg Area High School Auditorium

Hello and thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

My name is Susan Spicka, and I am the executive director of Education Voters of Pennsylvania, a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit policy and advocacy organization that works to ensure adequate and equitable public school funding for all students in the commonwealth.

Ed Voters has long advocated for funding reforms that will more closely align tuition payments to cyber charter schools with their actual costs. We have written reports and created fact sheets that are on our website.

Cyber charter school are awash in mountains of excess funding that they waste as evidenced by millions of dollars they spend on advertising every year; the cash payments and gift cards they send to families; the \$250 cash reimbursements they give to families to pay for their children's leisure activities; the parties they hold for families at arcades and restaurants all over the commonwealth; the tickets they give families to go to Penguins and Phillies games; and the staggering amount of real estate development being paid for, most specifically, by Pennsylvania's largest cyber charter school, Commonwealth Charter Academy, or CCA.

I was a school board member in Shippensburg from 2015-2019, where I experienced firsthand the negative fiscal impact that cyber charter school tuition bills have on students and on a community. We regularly raised property taxes to help pay for the increases in our cyber charter school tuition payments. Because of the charter school tuition calculation formulas in the law, even when our enrollment didn't go up, our tuition payments did.

Shippensburg is a Level Up district. We are also a growing district with primarily old buildings that are running out of classroom space for students. The district is in the middle of a multi-year process of determining current and future construction needs and how to finance these needs, which far exceed the funding we have available to pay for them.

Our athletic facilities are so degraded that the PIAA will not allow our district to host home track meets. We do not have a facility on school property that can accommodate football games. Instead, our football team plays at a municipal park where there is no indoor space for teams to meet before the game or during halftime. The space the home team once used was condemned because of asbestos, so the home team gathers on a soccer field and the away team huddles under a tent during halftime. Players share a bathroom that has two toilets and two urinals with the spectators who are attending the games.

I bring this up because earlier this year Commonwealth Charter Academy purchased a 4.73-acre parcel of land for \$2.375 million in the Shippensburg Area School District. They have begun construction of what will be a large, professional office building, owned by Perini Services, Inc, which is located in Lauderdale by the Sea, Florida.

Cyber charter schools are funded by the tuition payments they receive from school districts. Because there is no longer any state reimbursement to school districts for their charter school tuition costs, these tuition payments are funded primarily by property taxes.

In 2021-2022, Pennsylvanians sent \$1 billion in property taxes from our home and business owners to cyber charter schools. How much of this funding has been spent on advertising? How much has been spent on profits for management companies? How much has been spent reimbursing families for their children's horseback riding lessons or paying for tickets and parking for Phillies games? How much is being used to pay for a new, state-of-the-art office buildings that will be owned by a real estate developer in Florida? No one knows.

What I do know is that it is not thorough or efficient for a state to have a state funding system for education that starves one sector of schools—our school districts— while lavishing so much excess funding in another sector—cyber charter schools—that they can amass a real estate portfolio that would be the envy of most private corporations.

We need funding reforms to align tuition payments to cyber charter schools with what it actually costs them to educate children.

In addition, the PA legislature and General Counsel of PDE need to open an investigation into the unprecedented real estate acquisitions that are being made by CCA throughout the commonwealth. Pennsylvanians need to understand how much is being spent on land purchases and new construction of buildings. Who owns these properties? And what is their purpose—because cyber charter schools are supposed to educate students at home, not in brick-and-mortar buildings.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Pennsylvania Cyber Charters are Stockpiling Funds that Should be Spent on Students or Returned to Taxpayers

Executive Summary

Cyber charter surpluses are substantial, growing, and unregulated. This issue matters to school districts that are responsible for paying public cyber charter tuition and taxpayers who ultimately foot the bill. State law already prevents school districts from stockpiling excessive reserves, and Pennsylvania's cyber charters should be required to do the same. Cybers should either spend their surplus balances on student improvement or return the money to contributing school districts.

The PA Charter Performance Center analyzed the newly released financial reports for the 2020-21 school year to quantify changes in unrestricted surpluses for Pennsylvania's 14 statewide cyber charter schools and assessed the impact on students and taxpayers. Key findings include:

- + Pennsylvania's 14 cyber charters are sitting on over \$164 million in unrestricted reserves in the school year (SY) 2020-21. The surpluses, also called "unassigned fund balances," more than doubled compared to 2019-20 and skyrocketed seven-fold as compared to SY2018-19.
- + This increase was unique to cyber charters. Unassigned fund balances grew nearly 10 times faster in 2020-21 for cyber charters (+119%) than school districts (+12%).
- + The spike in surpluses cannot be explained by rising cyber charter enrollment. Cyber charter surpluses rose nearly 647% during this time period – over ten times the 63% increase in enrollment.
- + Using the standards applied to Pennsylvania school districts, 11 of 14 cyber charters are holding excessive surpluses.

These unrestricted, uncommitted resources could have been invested in students or returned to taxpayers but, absent reform, Pennsylvania cyber charter schools are not subject to the same oversight and accountability as public schools.

The time has come to update PA Charter School Law. This report makes the case for change and concludes with a set of policy recommendations.

How Do We Measure A Cyber Charter School’s Overall Financial Position?

Every year, cyber charter schools – along with school districts and other local educational agencies – are required to file Annual Financial Reports (AFRs) with the PA Department of Education. AFRs must be prepared in compliance with Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) principles and are the most complete statement of a school’s finances using data provided by the schools themselves.

One of the key measures of a school’s financial position is its “fund balance” or the difference between assets (what a school owns) and liabilities (what a school owes). Financial experts generally recommend that an organization maintain a fund balance of 5% to 10% to plan for future growth and guard against unforeseen events.

Resources in a school’s fund balance are further categorized as committed, assigned, and unassigned. For example, funds for a planned construction project would be designated as “committed” to a specific purpose. In contrast, “unassigned fund balance” is the portion of a cyber charter’s fund balance that is not “categorized as restricted, committed or assigned.”¹ In other words, it functions as a surplus.

There are no legal or regulatory restrictions on how cyber charters can spend these surpluses which include, but are not limited, to cash. Equally important is the fact that the PA Charter School Law does not place any caps or limitations on how much surplus a charter can accumulate.

These unregulated, unreserved, and undesigned funds provide a good proxy for a cyber charter school’s overall financial position. The PA Charter Performance Center previously analyzed data through SY2019-20 and found that the state’s cyber charter sector was sitting on \$75 million in unrestricted reserves, raising questions about accountability to taxpayers and commitment to student performance.² New data shows that these surpluses more than doubled in SY2020-21.



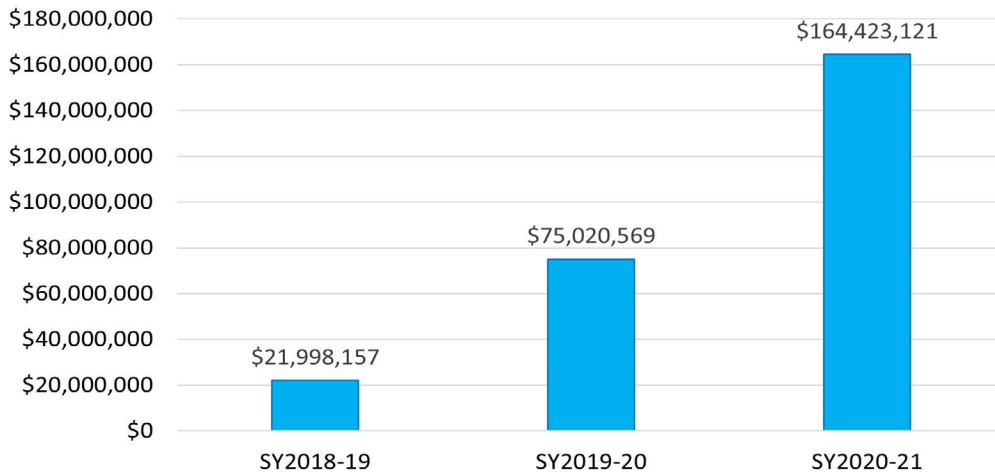
PA Charter School Law does not place any caps or limitations on how much surplus a charter can accumulate. New data shows that these surpluses more than doubled in SY2020-21



Cyber Charters Continue To Accumulate Huge, Unrestricted Reserves

Pennsylvania's cyber charters are sitting on a growing stockpile of funds. Financial data provided by the cyber charter schools in their 2020-21 Annual Financial Reports shows the total surplus for PA's 14 cyber charters doubled to \$164 million last year from \$75 million in SY2019-20. This trend is accelerating. In fact, the total surplus grew seven-fold over the last two years from \$22 million to \$164 million.

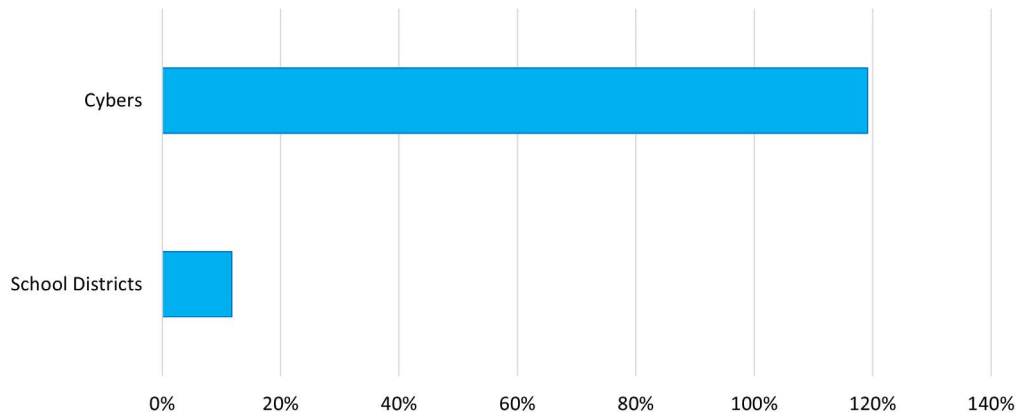
Chart 1: Cyber Surpluses More Than Doubled In 2021, Up Seven-Fold Over Last Two Years



Source: PA Department of Education, General Fund Balance: 2011-12 to 2020-21

What accounts for this virtual explosion of unrestricted resources for cyber charters over the last two years? Comparing data for Pennsylvania's 500 school districts with its 14 cyber charter schools makes it clear that school districts did not experience the same spike. In fact, cyber charter unassigned fund balances grew by 119% in SY2020-21 or nearly ten times faster than school districts, which only grew by 12%. Clearly, the tuition payments that cyber charter schools receive exceed their actual operating costs, accounting for the huge surpluses they are amassing.

Chart 2: Cyber Surpluses Grew 10 Times More Than School Districts, SY2021 v SY2020



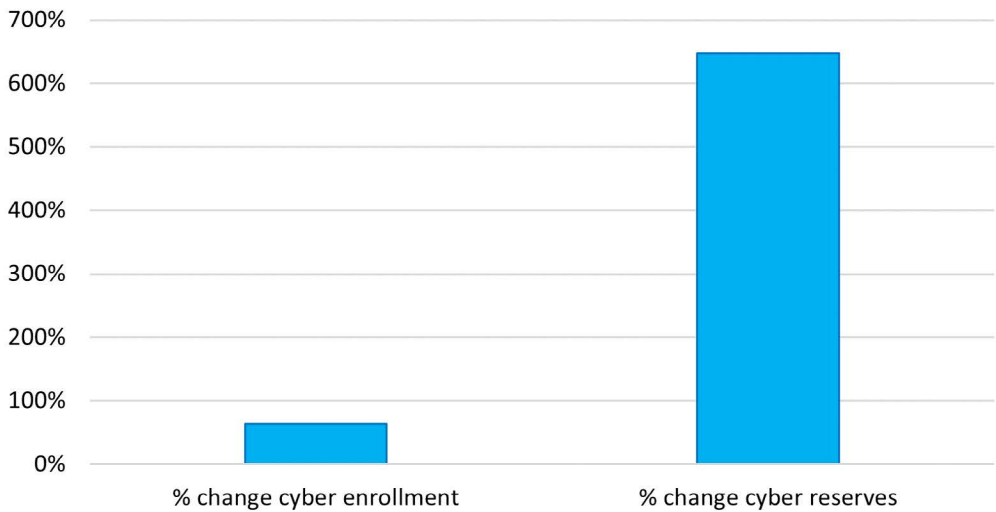
Source: PA Department of Education, General Fund Balance: 2011-12 to 2020-21

Cyber Surpluses Grew 10 Times More Than School Districts, SY2021 v SY2020			
	SY21	SY20	%Change
School Districts	\$2,207,217,298	\$1,974,518,545	12%
Cyber Charters	\$164,423,121	\$75,020,569	119%

Source: PA Department of Education, General Fund Balance: 2011-12 to 2020-21

Nor does adjusting for the sharp rise in cyber charter enrollment during the pandemic explain the huge increase in cyber charter surpluses. Cyber charter enrollment rose by 63% between SY2018-19 (the year before the pandemic) and SY2020-21. If the per-student tuition that school districts send to cyber charters were in line with the actual cost of educating a new student, cybers would not have built up substantial new surpluses over the last two years. The fact is that cyber charter surpluses rose nearly 647% during this time period – over ten times the 63% increase in enrollment. The spike in surpluses suggests that cybers elected not to spend available additional resources to improve student learning and instead banked the funds away.

Chart 3: Cyber Reserves Grew 10 Times More than Enrollment, 2019 to 2021



Source: PA Department of Education, General Fund Balance: 2011-12 to 2020-21 and Public School Enrollments, 2018-19 and 2020-21

Improving student performance should be a priority for the cyber sector. Every one of Pennsylvania’s statewide cyber charters has been identified as needing improvement under the state’s ESSA School Improvement and Accountability plan, placing them among the state’s lowest performing schools. In addition, 14 cyber charters scored below the statewide average on the latest statistically reliable English and math assessments in SY2018-19.³ (Only one in four (24%) of cyber students took the state assessments in SY2020-21, making the test results unreliable and leaving parents and educators without the data they need to judge cyber charter performance.)

PA Cyber Has A Long History of Amassing Unrestricted Reserves

The figures for some individual cyber charters are shocking. For example, Pennsylvania Cyber amassed a \$63 million surplus last year, a \$31 million increase in a single year. As a point of reference, \$63 million is nearly two-thirds the Level Up funding the legislature appropriated for the 2021-22 school year.

	2018-19 Unassigned Fund Balance 0850	2019-20 Unassigned Fund Balance 0850	2020-21 Unassigned Fund Balance 0850
Pennsylvania Cyber CS	\$13,768,846	\$32,483,919	\$63,308,393
Reach Cyber CS	\$4,668,127	\$12,577,339	\$31,250,087
Insight PA Cyber CS	\$2,282,367	\$1,440,970	\$21,552,509
Pennsylvania Leadership CS	\$1,311,106	\$16,253,358	\$14,171,108
Agora Cyber CS	-\$7,917,955	-\$6,077,179	\$11,269,163
Esperanza Cyber CS	\$1,857,688	\$3,794,731	\$5,982,636
ASPIRA Bilingual Cyber CS	\$988,555	\$1,499,143	\$4,520,292
Achievement House CS	\$1,025,045	\$4,644,765	\$2,938,826
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	\$2,444,236	\$4,644,242	\$2,696,207
Central PA Digital Learning Foundation CS	\$335,064	\$397,058	\$2,301,827
Pennsylvania Distance Learning CS	\$997,153	\$1,436,065	\$1,986,047
21st Century Cyber CS	\$17,762	\$628,015	\$1,439,722
Commonwealth Charter Academy CS	\$220,163	\$904,877	\$608,162
Susq-Cyber CS	\$0	\$393,266	\$398,142
TOTAL	\$21,998,157	\$75,020,569	\$164,423,121

Source: PA Department of Education, General Fund Balance: 2011-12 to 2020-21

Pennsylvania Cyber is the second largest cyber charter in the commonwealth with 10,500 students, making it approximately the same size as the Lancaster School District with 10,200 students. While the educational missions are the same, the Lancaster School District posted a \$17.2 million unassigned fund balance in SY2020-21 – or just 27% of Pennsylvania Cyber’s \$63.3 million for the same year.

Pennsylvania Cyber was audited by two successive PA Auditor Generals in 2012 (5 findings) and 2016 (8 findings). One of the issues raised in the 2012 audit⁴ concerned the size of the cyber charter’s “unreserved fund balance” which at the time stood at \$13 million. The Auditor General described this as “the highest amount among all operating charters and cybers.”

While the Auditor General did not question Pennsylvania Cyber’s intentions or financial planning, he noted that the “lack of specific reporting related to the size of these accounts and how they are expended means that the cyber school does not have to publicly account for their use.”

The Auditor General went on to describe how this failure put local taxpayers at risk:

Since charter and cyber charter schools are funded under the law largely by tuition payments from school district, including local taxpayer money, with students attending the charter or cyber charter school, the need for accountability and monitoring of these discretionary funds is heightened. Any misuse of these “discretionary” unreserved fund balances could result in financial disaster for the school and in a loss of state and local taxpayer money intended for public education.⁵

Ten years after this audit, little has changed. Pennsylvania Cyber’s unassigned fund balance has grown from \$13 million to \$63 million and remains the largest in the cyber sector. Auditor General DeFoor, however, has gone in a different direction from his predecessors by dismantling the Bureau of School Audits and issuing a letter that, due to limited staff resources, his office would not be opening an audit into any cyber charter school.⁶ As a result, there is virtually no protection for taxpayers and nothing that requires to cyber charters to ensure that taxpayer funds are expended for educational purposes.

Most Cyber Charters Are Holding Surpluses That Exceed The 8% Limit for School Districts

Pennsylvania state law (24 PS §6-688) limits the amount of unassigned fund balance to 8% for a school district whose expenditures exceed \$19 million if the district is going to raise taxes. The underlying rationale behind the 8% threshold is to prevent a district from building up excessive reserves and to protect local taxpayers from unnecessary property tax increases. Because cyber charter schools are exempt from these guidelines, there is currently no statutory limit on the amount of surplus a cyber charter school can generate or rules on the use of excessive surpluses.

Absent legal limits on the amount of fund balance that a cyber charter can accumulate, where do most cyber charters fall with respect to the 8% standard? The PA Charter Performance previously analyzed fund balance data for SY2015-16 to SY2019-20 and found that cyber fund balances as a percentage of total expenditures exceeded the 8% benchmark over half (52%) of the time.⁷

Data for the 2020-21 school year show that the problem of excessive surpluses has accelerated. Last year, 11 of 14 cyber charters reported unassigned fund balance in excess of 8% of total expenditures. The unrestricted reserves for three cyber charters – ASPIRA Bilingual Cyber, Esperanza Cyber, and Central PA Digital Learning Foundation – exceeded 50% of expenditures. Insight PA Cyber and Pennsylvania Cyber reported unassigned fund balances over 40% of total expenditures.

Table 2: 11 Cyber Charters Reported Reserves That Exceed 8% Benchmark For School Districts

	SY 2020-21 Total Expenditures	2020-21 Unassigned Fund Balance 0850	Unassigned Fund Balance as % of Expenditures
ASPIRA Bilingual Cyber CS	\$8,018,637	\$4,520,292	56.4%
Esperanza Cyber CS	\$10,646,009	\$5,982,636	56.2%
Central PA Digital Learning Foundation CS	\$4,265,697	\$2,301,827	54.0%
Insight PA Cyber CS	\$49,688,906	\$21,552,509	43.4%
Pennsylvania Cyber CS	\$147,673,985	\$63,308,393	42.9%
Reach Cyber CS	\$97,301,849	\$31,250,087	32.1%
Pennsylvania Leadership CS	\$48,531,739	\$14,171,108	29.2%
Susq-Cyber CS	\$1,523,487	\$398,142	26.1%
Achievement House CS	\$12,148,888	\$2,938,826	24.2%
Pennsylvania Distance Learning CS	\$18,447,393	\$1,986,047	10.8%
Agora Cyber CS	\$106,285,036	\$11,269,163	10.6%
21st Century Cyber CS	\$22,229,679	\$1,439,722	6.5%
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	\$41,689,186	\$2,696,207	6.5%
Commonwealth Charter Academy CS	\$313,925,560	\$608,162	0.2%

Source: PA Department of Education, General Fund Balance: 2011-12 to 2020-21 and Expenditure Detail, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Under Pennsylvania’s cyber charter funding system, taxpayers are on the hook for every new dollar of surplus that cybers accumulate. Unlike most states that fund cyber charters at the state level, cyber charters in Pennsylvania are funded by local school districts which in turn are heavily reliant on local property taxes. It is one thing to ask taxpayers to support higher taxes to enhance the educational opportunities for local students. It is another proposition entirely when their tax dollars end up as unregulated, unreserved, and undesignated funds controlled by statewide cyber charter schools.



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Taxpayers are on the hook for every new dollar of surplus that cybers accumulate.

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Recommendations

Compared to the 27 other states that permit cyber charters, Pennsylvania has some of the weakest systems to ensure students and taxpayers are getting their money's worth.⁸ The Pennsylvania General Assembly and the PA Department of Education (PDE) should enact four specific measures to prevent this financial stockpiling and stem the flow of taxpayer dollars into cyber charter bank accounts.

1. Adopt statutory limits on cyber charter fund balances. The Pennsylvania School Code already caps the amount of unassigned fund balance that a school district can accumulate to 8% as a form of taxpayer protection. The same logic should apply to preventing cyber charters from stockpiling excessive fund balances.

The Commonwealth should adopt new guidelines that require cybers with excessive surpluses to refund payments to contributing school districts and/or spend unassigned resources on student performance. Cybers that fail to meet these stricter standards should be subject to restrictions on new state grants or local revenue.

Several fund balance bills have been introduced in recent years. In the 2022 legislative session, House Bill 314 (Rep. DeLuca) would prohibit payments to charter or cyber charter schools unless those schools have adopted budgets that include an estimated unreserved, undesignated fund balance less than 5% of their total budgeted expenditures. Similarly, in the 2019-20 regular session, HB 1329 (Rep. Carroll) proposed bringing public charter schools in line with school districts by imposing the same limits on the unassigned fund balances that charter schools may accumulate. This bill required public charter schools to refund unassigned fund balances in excess of the limit on a pro rata basis to all school districts that paid tuition to the charter school entity in the prior school year.

2. Audit every cyber charter every three years. According to reporting by the Scranton Times-Tribune, six of fourteen cyber schools have never been audited by the state and others are severely behind schedule. Commonwealth Charter Academy, for example, the state's largest cyber charter with a \$270 million budget, was last audited in 2012. The PA Auditor General Timothy DeFoor should prioritize these overdue reviews, focusing on the cybers with the largest budgets. Instead, the PA Auditor General has chosen to dismantle the Bureau of School Audits and has issued a letter that, due to limited staff resources, his office would not be opening an audit into any cyber charter.

Reversing course would be an opportunity for Auditor General DeFoor to demonstrate his political independence. The "Tim DeFoor for Auditor General campaign" received over \$1.4 million in campaign contributions from the Commonwealth Leaders Fund in the 2019-2020 cycle, a remarkable 79% of all contributions received. School choice proponent Jeff Yaas and his Students First PAC are major contributors of the Commonwealth Leaders Fund.

3. The PA Department of Education should make better use of the charter school renewal process as a tool to improve cyber performance.

Pennsylvania's Charter School Law requires PDE to conduct a comprehensive review process prior to granting a five-year renewal of a cyber charter. The purpose of this process is to enable schools to receive timely feedback and implement corrective action to improve student performance. PDE can also revoke or non-renew the charters of persistently underperforming schools.

Currently 11 of 14 cyber charter schools are overdue to have their charters renewed, including three of the five largest cyber charter schools (Commonwealth Charter Academy, Agora Cyber, and PA Leadership). This means that two out of three cyber students last year were enrolled in a school that was operating beyond the charter's end date. Technically, these charters remain valid until PDE renews or initiates revocation procedures and such procedures are exhausted. In practice, the backlog of reviews is a missed opportunity to use the renewal process as a tool to improve cyber student performance. PDE has begun work on five renewals but has failed to materially reduce the backlog in the last year.

4. Pass cyber charter funding reform. Legislation in both chambers (House Bill 272 and Senate Bill 27) would standardize cyber charter tuition statewide for non-special education students, and require charter schools to use the criteria in the Special Education Funding Formula – the same criteria used by all district-run schools – to calculate special education tuition. According to PDE, these two measures would save school districts \$373 million annually. The magnitude of the excess fund balances documented in this report strengthens the case for tuition reform.

While both bills remain stuck in committee, there has been some notable progress at building bipartisan support in the last year. House Bill 272 currently boasts 70 co-sponsors, including 20 members from the Republican side of the aisle. This is evidence of a growing recognition that charter school funding reform is a taxpayer issue, not a partisan one.

The bottom line is that cyber charters are stockpiling dollars that should either be used to improve student outcomes or be returned to taxpayers. As one education observer summarized, "cybers are not subject to the same kind of oversight and accountability that public schools are, and there is no way to characterize this non-regulation as beneficial to students – it is, in fact, the exact opposite."⁹

Endnotes

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education Accounting Bulletin #2010-01: Implementation of GASB Statement #54: Fund Balance Reporting.
2. PA Charter Performance Center, A New Look at Cyber Charter Fund Balances, June 2021. <https://www.childrenfirstpa.org/report/a-new-look-at-cyber-charter-fund-balances/>
3. Ibid.
4. Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School, Beaver County, Pennsylvania, Performance Audit Report (December 2012).
5. Ibid.
6. <https://edvoterspa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Response-to-Susan-Spicka-Ltr-5.23.22.pdf>
7. PA Charter Performance Center, A New Look at Cyber Charter Fund Balances, June 2021. <https://www.childrenfirstpa.org/report/a-new-look-at-cyber-charter-fund-balances/>
8. <https://www.childrenfirstpa.org/report/pa-disconnect-in-cyber-charter-oversight-and-funding/>
9. <https://curmudgucation.blogspot.com/2022/01/pa-one-more-cyber-school-regulatory.html>

Children First, formerly known as Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), serves as the leading child advocacy organization working to improve the lives and life chances of children in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Children First undertakes specific and focused projects in areas affecting the healthy growth and development of children, including child care, public education, child health, juvenile justice, and child welfare.

childrenfirstpa.org
facebook.com/childrenfirstpa

Through thoughtful and informed advocacy, community education, targeted service projects, and budget analysis, Children First watches out and speaks out for children and families.

Children First serves the families of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties as well as children across the Commonwealth. We are a committed advocate and an independent watchdog for the well-being of all our children.

twitter.com/childrenfirstpa
instagram.com/childrenfirstpa

Children First
990 Spring Garden Street
Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19123
215-563-5848



EDUCATION VOTERS
of Pennsylvania

FIXING — THE — FLAWS

IN PA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING SYSTEM

FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS:

HOW AN OUTDATED LAW
WASTES PUBLIC MONEY,
ENCOURAGES GAMING THE SYSTEM,
AND LIMITS SCHOOL CHOICE

PENNSYLVANIA HAS TWO SEPARATE FUNDING SYSTEMS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Special education for school districts is funded using the Special Education Funding Formula (SEFF) that was enacted in 2014 by the Pennsylvania legislature's Special Education Funding Commission. *This formula bases state funding payments to school districts on the **ACTUAL COSTS OF THE SERVICES** provided to students with disabilities & applies to all new state funding.*

DISTRICTS

Against the recommendation of the Special Education Funding Commission, the Pennsylvania legislature exempted charter schools from this formula. *Charter schools continue to be funded using a "one-size-fits-all" formula that pays the **SAME TUITION PER STUDENT REGARDLESS OF STUDENT NEED** for each student from a school district.*

CHARTERS

*This decision - to use two separate funding systems - has **BROAD IMPLICATIONS** for families, students, and taxpayers.*

The SEFF was intended to better meet the needs of students and schools than a "one-size-fits-all" approach by more accurately distributing state funding based on the actual costs of providing special education and related services to students with varying needs.

SEFF CATEGORIZES SPECIAL EDUCATION INTO **THREE COST CATEGORIES**

T
I
E
R

1

MINIMAL INTERVENTIONS

eg. weekly speech therapy sessions

T
I
E
R

2

MORE SIGNIFICANT INTERVENTIONS

eg. one-on-one help during the school day, a self-contained classroom, physical or occupational therapy, etc.

T
I
E
R

3

MOST EXTENSIVE & COSTLY INTERVENTIONS

eg. full-time nurse or specialized out-of-district placement

CRITICS OF THE CURRENT "ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL" CHARTER SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA ARGUE THAT IT CREATES **INCENTIVES** FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS TO ENROLL STUDENTS WHOSE SERVICES COST LESS THAN THE PER STUDENT TUITION THEY RECEIVE FROM DISTRICTS AND – **TO DENY ACCESS TO STUDENTS** – WHOSE DISABILITY REQUIRES GREATER INTERVENTION AND HIGHER COSTS.

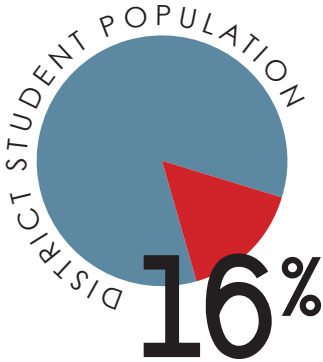
For the charter school, students whose **SERVICES:**

COST LESS than the tuition rate =  **FINANCIAL GAIN**

EXCEED the tuition rate =  **FINANCIAL LOSS**

This report analyzes special education enrollment data for school districts & charter schools based on the three cost tiers in PA's Special Education Funding Formula to see if critics' claims are borne out.

PENNSYLVANIA'S FLAWED CALCULATION FOR FUNDING CHARTER SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION



The current special education funding formula assumes that 16% of each district's students receive special education services, but the statewide average is actually 19.88%. If districts have a larger percentage, their total spending is spread across more students so their per-student spending in the district is actually less than the formula assumes.

In 406 districts, the percentage of students receiving special education is 16% or higher, meaning they are **OVERPAYING CHARTERS** for special education relative to their district average. There are only 93 districts where the percentage is under 16%.¹

Because of this inaccurate calculation, typical school districts are paying charter schools nearly 25% more per special education student, on average, than they spend on students who remain in their own district schools.

Allowing each school district to use its actual percentage of students who receive special education as the divisor of the charter tuition calculation would equalize average funding for district and charter special education students from the same school district and **SAVE AROUND \$65 MILLION**.



Average Daily Membership = 4853
Special Education Students = 965
Percentage of Special Ed Students = 19.88%
Total Special Ed Spending = \$14,217,761

COST PER SPECIAL ED DISTRICT STUDENT – VS – **TUITION PER SPECIAL ED CHARTER STUDENT**
ACTUAL AVERAGE AMOUNT SPENT USING 16% CURRENT LAW CALCULATION
 $\$14,217,761 \div 965 \text{ Students}$ $\$14,217,761 \div 776.5 \text{ Students}$
= \$14,733 Per Student **= \$18,310 Per Student**

Deer Run School District paid **\$3,577 MORE** in special education funding per charter school student than it spends on students who remain in district schools.

¹ www.pasbo.org/16percent

Image credit: www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/vintage>Vintage vector created by sergey_kandakov - www.freepik.com

Charters are **overpaid** for the cost of educating students who require fewer services and **underpaid** for the cost of students who need more services.



STUDENT A

.5 hr/wk speech instruction

ACTUAL COST FOR STUDENT A:
\$15,000
Payment to Charter:
\$27,000

STUDENT B

Needs full-time aid

ACTUAL COST FOR STUDENT B:
\$35,000
Payment to Charter:
\$27,000

#FixSpecialEdFunding

AN INVITATION FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS TO EXPLOIT THE SYSTEM

The fact that charter schools receive the same amount of tuition from a school district for each special education student regardless of the costs of the services provided, whether the student receives a half hour of speech therapy per week or needs a full-time aide and extensive nursing care, combined with the **ABSENCE OF ANY REQUIREMENT** that the money be spent on special education services – *a charter school can spend the money on other things, or take it as profit* –

creates an incentive for them to –

GAME THE SYSTEM.



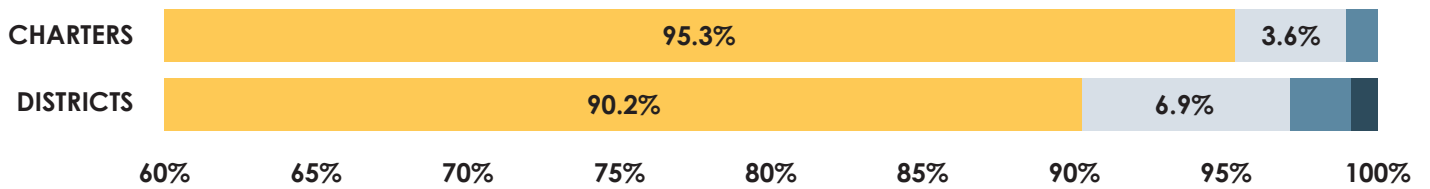
A CONSISTENT PATTERN OF UNDER ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS WITH HIGHER-COST SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The report finds that statewide there are

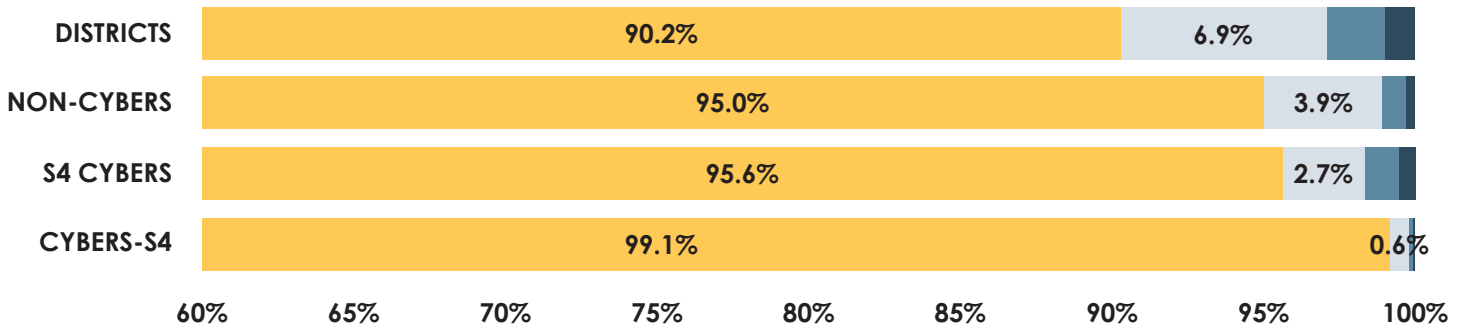
FEWER THAN 50% of Tier 2 and 3 Students enrolled in charter schools than expected in a non-biased system.

The pattern is similar or worse in each of the five regions examined. Students with higher-cost special education needs are **NOT GETTING THE SAME SCHOOL CHOICE OPPORTUNITIES** other students are receiving. *Please see our full report for additional charter school enrollment data by region.*

PERCENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN EACH TIER BY SCHOOL TYPE, PENNSYLVANIA 2017-18



PERCENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN EACH TIER CYBER VS. NON-CYBER CHARTERS 2017-18



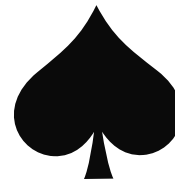
"S4 Cybers" are Agora Cyber CS, Commonwealth Charter Academy CS, Pennsylvania Cyber CS, Pennsylvania Leadership CS



KEY FINDINGS

Charter school enrollment patterns are consistent with the likelihood that many schools are exploiting the funding system by

CHERRY PICKING *students with low-cost special education needs*
& **DISCRIMINATING** *against students with high-cost needs.*



The share of Tier 2 and Tier 3 students in charter schools is about half of what would be expected in a non-biased system. The pattern is similar or worse in each of the five regions examined.

Cyber charters enroll far fewer Tier 2 and 3 students than district schools and fewer than brick and mortar charter schools. The four largest cyber charter schools, Agora Cyber CS, Commonwealth Charter Academy CS, Pennsylvania Cyber CS, and Pennsylvania Leadership CS, together have an enrollment of 4.4% Tier 2 and 3 students while the other 12 cyber charters enroll fewer than 1%. Seven cyber charter schools enroll no Tier 2 or 3 students.

66

BRICK-AND-MORTAR *charter schools, 41% of the state's total charters, enroll NO STUDENTS IN TIERS 2 OR 3.*

PHILADELPHIA

In Philadelphia, some schools that operate as catchment-based Renaissance schools have higher shares of students with disabilities in Tier 2 and 3, but still enroll a smaller share of high-need students than district schools. Enrollment differs among operators, with Mastery serving more students with disabilities in Tier 2 & 3 than KIPP or Universal. **24** charter schools in Philly (29%) enroll no Tier 2 or Tier 3 students.

PITTSBURGH

Environmental Charter School at Frick Park and City High Charter in Pittsburgh enroll expected numbers of students in each tier. Eight of Allegheny County's **22** charter schools (36%) enroll no students in Tiers 2 or 3.

LEHIGH

Lehigh County's **6** of eight charter schools (75%) enroll no students in Tiers 2 or 3.

DAUPHIN

Dauphin County's **3** of four charter schools (75%) enroll no students in Tiers 2 or 3.

ERIE

Erie County's **4** charter schools (100%) enroll no students in Tiers 2 or 3.

9 COUNTIES

All charter schools in Adams, Bedford, Berks, Clinton, Huntingdon, Lancaster, Luzerne, Mercer, and Westmoreland Counties – **ALL (100%) ENROLL NO STUDENTS IN TIERS 2 OR 3.**

CONCLUSIONS

Students with higher-cost special education needs are **NOT GETTING THE SAME SCHOOL CHOICE** opportunities other students are receiving. *This subverts one of the goals of the charter school law, may violate equal opportunity laws, and should be rectified.*

This system also **NEGATIVELY IMPACTS TAXPAYERS AND STUDENTS** who remain in district schools. *School districts must raise taxes and/or sacrifice educational services and programming for students in district schools in order to pay charter school tuition bills in excess of what charters spend providing services for students with disabilities.* Excess special education funding sent to charter schools is wasted by charter schools that spend it on things other than educating students with disabilities.

♠ THE BEST AND FAIREST SOLUTION ♠

The Pennsylvania legislature should follow the recommendation of the Special Education Funding Commission and apply the Special Education Funding Formula to school districts and charter schools alike. This would save more than \$100 million and more closely tie funding to actual costs, substantially reducing the incentive for charters schools to cherry pick students, and thus improving opportunities for school choice.²

♥ A SECOND-BEST SOLUTION ♥

If the state legislature is unwilling to enact a tiered funding system, it should at least change the current formula to allow each school district to use its actual percentage of students who receive special education as the divisor in the charter tuition calculation. This would equalize average funding for district and charter special education students from the same district and save around \$65 million.

♣ CHARTER SCHOOL PROFITS SHOULD BE RETURNED TO DISTRICTS ♣

A law should also be enacted requiring charter schools to return special education funding that is not used to provide services for students with disabilities. This money should go back to school districts and be allocated to help other children get the services they need. This reform would virtually eliminate the incentive for charters to cherry pick students who require low cost services in order to reap a profit off of special education tuition. It would also preclude special education funding being spent on other things.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Blyden Potts for his substantial work on this report and the Keystone Research Center for their support as the fiscal sponsor of Education Voters of PA.

ABOUT EDUCATION VOTERS OF PA

Education Voters of PA is a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that was established in 2007 to promote a pro-public education agenda with elected leaders and the public.



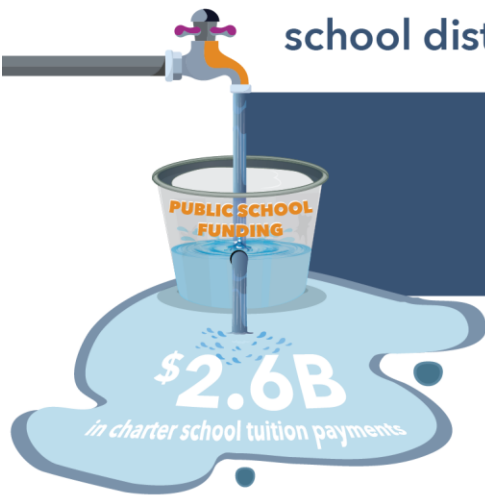
To read the full report and to support our work visit www.EducationVotersPA.org

²www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Charter%20Schools/CharterPolicyReform/Pages/LegisProposal.aspx

\$2.6 billion in charter school tuition payments **drain funding** from school districts and **increase property taxes**

In 2021-2022

Shippensburg Area School District
paid charter schools \$2,387,363

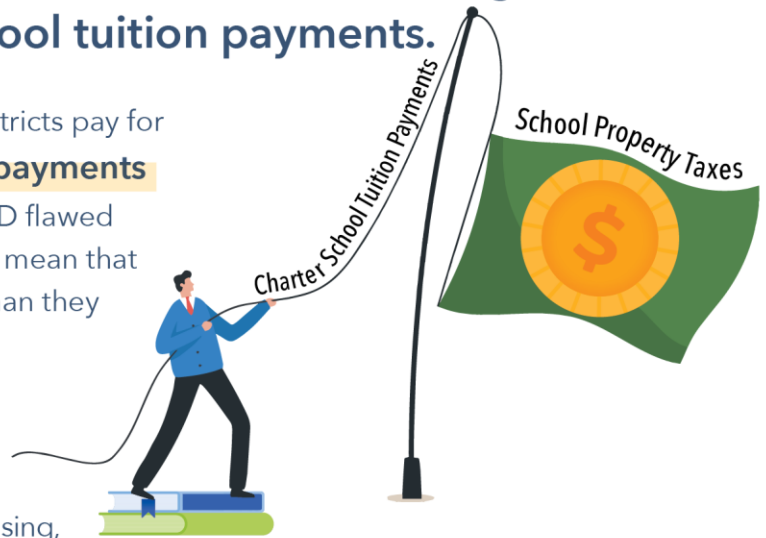


Charter and cyber charter schools are privately managed public schools. Pennsylvania law allows any student to apply to attend any charter or cyber charter school in the state. Students' home school districts are mandated by state law to pay tuition to the charter schools for these students.

In the 2020-2021 school year, Pennsylvania taxpayers spent more than **\$2.6 billion** in tuition payments to charter schools, including more than **\$1 billion** on cyber charter school tuition payments.

The state no longer provides a reimbursement to help districts pay for charter school tuition costs, so **charter school tuition payments are funded primarily through property taxes.** AND flawed calculations in Pennsylvania's outdated charter school law mean that school districts often send charter schools more money than they need to educate children.

Charter and cyber charter schools can spend excess funding from school districts on anything, so your property tax dollars can end up paying for expensive cyber charter school advertising, lavish charter school CEO salaries, exorbitant contracts with management companies, and more.



Only state lawmakers can fix the charter school law to align tuition payments to charter schools with their actual costs to save tax dollars, reduce pressure on property tax increases, and curb wasteful spending by charter schools.

Lawmakers who represent **Shippensburg Area SD**

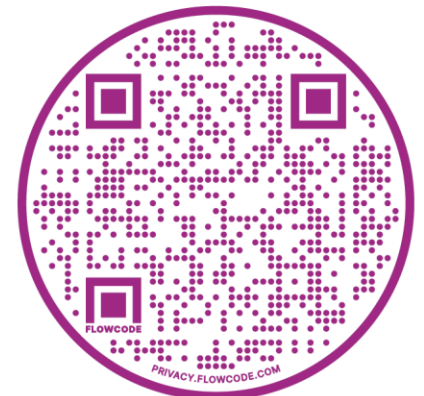
State Sen. Greg Rothman

State Sen. Doug Mastriano

State Rep. Richard Irvin

State Rep. Torren Ecker

State Rep. Barbara Gleim



EDUCATION VOTERS
of Pennsylvania

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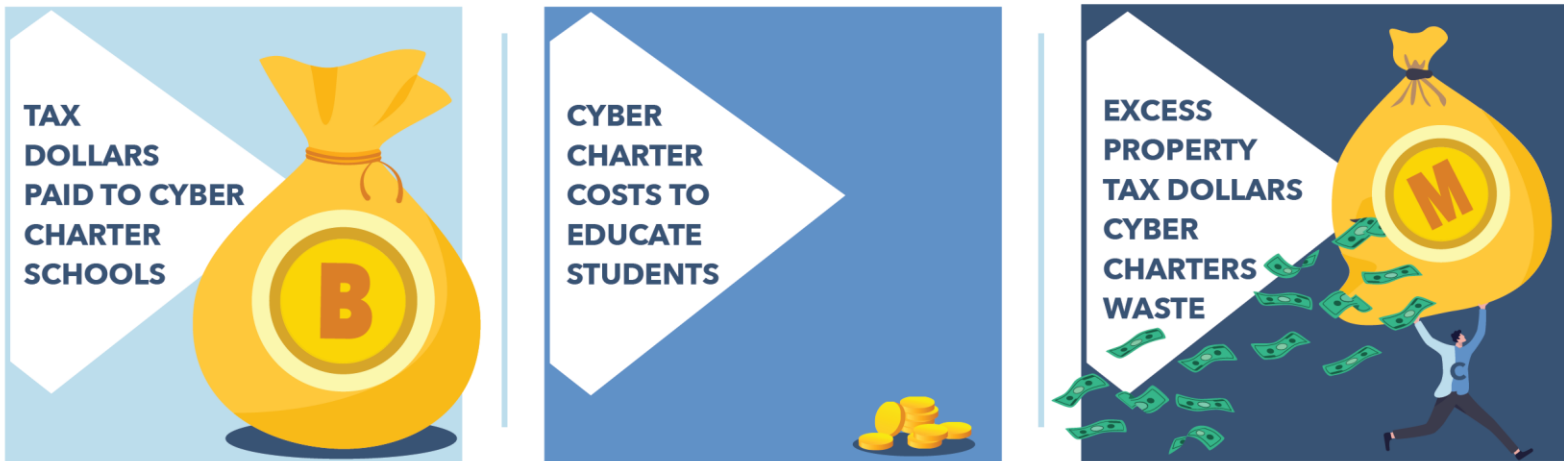
Pennsylvania's cyber charter school problem

In 2020-2021 Pennsylvanians paid cyber charter schools more than \$1 billion

Under Pennsylvania's 25-year-old charter school law, there's no distinction in funding between a charter school that provides exclusively in-person education and one that provides exclusively online education - even though the costs to operate those schools are vastly different.

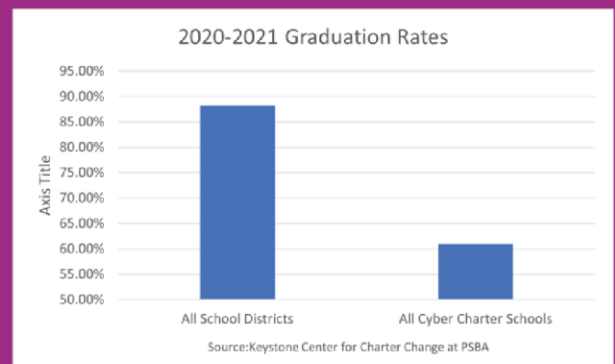
By not recognizing those differences, state law provides cyber charter schools a loophole - allowing them to collect excess tuition dollars well above what it costs them to provide an online education.

This means cyber charter schools have nearly unlimited dollars to spend on lavish CEO salaries, Internet ads, billboards up and down the Turnpike, countless radio and TV ads, and exorbitant management contracts. All the while stockpiling millions in reserve funds.



Overpaying for failure

Pennsylvania's cyber charter schools are among the lowest-performing schools in the commonwealth. In 2020-2021 just under 61% of cyber charter school students graduated in four years compared to more than 88% of students who graduated from our public school districts.



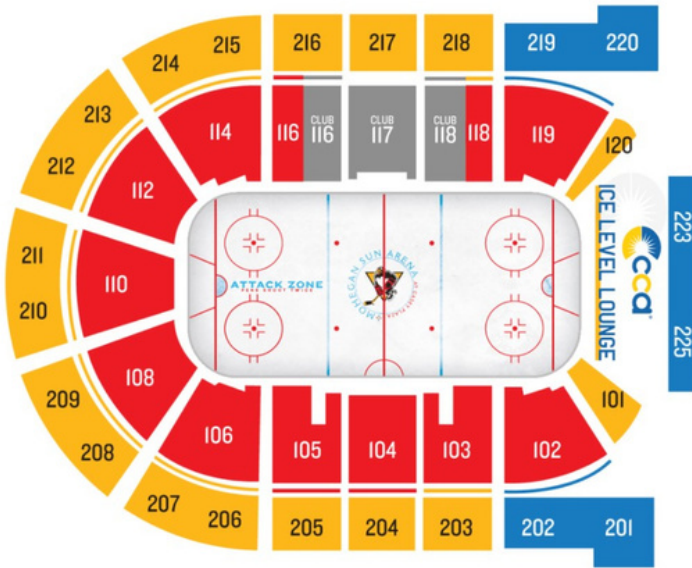
The Solution?

State lawmakers must fix Pennsylvania's 25-year-old charter school law to match tuition payments more closely with what it **actually costs** cyber charter schools to educate students. This will save tax dollars, reduce pressure on property tax increases, and curb wasteful spending by charter schools.

Item 1

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS INFORMATION

Looking for Ticket information? Fill in the form at the bottom of this page, or send us a text message by clicking here: [Text](#)



Item 2

25

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2022 AT 4 PM – 8 PM

USA Ninja Nook Grand Opening!

United Sports Academy Ninja Nook

[About](#) [Discussion](#)

Details

337 people responded

Event by United Sports Academy Ninja Nook

United Sports Academy Ninja Nook

Duration: 4 hr

Public - Anyone on or off Facebook

The time is FINALLY here! We are beyond excited to invite you to our GRAND OPENING of the USA Ninja Nook!

Join us from 4PM-8PM for a night filled with adventure, fun, food and prizes!

The first 100 guests will be entered to win fun prizes!

Our Grand Opening is sponsored by CCA, the Commonwealth Charter Academy.

Food and refreshments will be catered by Alexander's Restaurant.

Admission price will be \$15 for adults and children. \$12 for first responders (must have a valid ID).

<https://app.iclasspro.com/portal/usaninjanook/booking>

The USA Ninja Nook is United Sports Academy's newest location. It is a state of the art facility boasting 20 ft. climbing walls, both 12 and 14 ft. warped walls, a ropes course, salmon ladder, chimney, and speed walls. We also have an above ground trampoline, a double-mini trampoline, Tumbi Trak, beams and bars for gymnastics.

This gym is open to children as young as 3 years of age through adults, our first all-inclusive facility! We offer recreational group classes for children and adults, private birthday parties, private field trips and camps, private team building events for businesses, as well as public open gym for the whole family!!!

Visit our website for more information at unitedsportsacademygym.com [See less](#)

Parties

Item 3

HOME / CCA FAMILY PARTY

CCA Family Party Registration

Bring the kids and have some family fun with CCA!

At CCA Family Parties, the fun never stops! These FREE social events are designed for your family to meet local CCA families and talk with some of our amazing teachers. Have some food, enjoy free activities at the venue, and explore how an online learning experience with CCA will put your child on the path to future success.

Space is limited and registration for this event is required. Fill out your information below to be a part of the fun!

You are registering for the following Pittsburgh Area Family Party:

Date: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 6:00 pm EST

Address: Dave and Busters, 190 E Waterfront Dr Homestead PA, 15120

06/22

Pittsburgh Area Family Party

Wednesday, June 22, 2022 at 6:00 pm EST

Dave and Busters
6260 Northway Dr.
Pittsburgh PA, 15237

[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT](#)

07/13

Camp Hill Family Party

Wednesday, July 13, 2022 at 6:00 pm EST

Dave and Busters
3503 Capital City Mall Dr
Camp Hill PA, 17011

[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT](#)

Item 4

06/22

Allentown Family Party

Wednesday, June 22, 2022 at 6:00 pm EST

Lehigh Valley Laser Tag
874 Marcon Blvd.
Allentown PA, 18109

[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT](#)

Item 5

05/26

Scranton Family Party

Thursday, May 26, 2022 at 6:00 pm EST

Idle Hours North
2008 Scranton-Carbondale Hwy.
Scranton PA, 18508

[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT](#)

Item 6

07/19 Johnstown Family Party
 Tuesday, July 19, 2022 at 6:00 pm EST

814 Lanes & Games
 1140 Frances Street
 Johnstown PA, 15904
[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT](#)

Item 7

Verizon 10:51 PM 99%

CCA

photos Videos Posts **Community** Groups

Kim Marsh DiCandia CCA
 Feb 24 · 🌐

👉 We all had a great time at the Penguins vs Phantom game last night 👉 Thank you, CCA ❤️

[Learn more](#)
ccaeducate.me

Home News Marketplace Feeds Notifications Menu

Item 8

Verizon 10:50 PM 99%

CCA

photos Videos Posts **Community** Groups

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins
 Apr 16 · 🌐

Stop by the CCA Carnival on Saturday, April 16th from 4 to 6pm located at 264 Highland Park Blvd, Wilkes-Barre Township, across from the arena. Learn about what CCA has to offer!

Also, the first 200 people ages 7 and up will receive a Free CCA/Pens foam hockey puck. There will be free games to be played and light refreshments served! Also on hand will be the CCA Robot Dog "Spot".

[Learn more](#)
ccaeducate.me

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Item 9

Verizon 10:46 PM 100%

CCA

photos Videos Posts **Community** Groups

Brook May
 Jul 5 · 🌐

Thank you CCA for the fun night at the Philadelphia Phillies!!! Great win boys! 🐾

[Learn more](#)
ccaeducate.me

Home News Marketplace Feeds Notifications Menu

\$150 cash payments, field trips to Dave and Busters and trips to Disney: Are cyber charter schools playing games with PA tax dollars? What game is Auditor General DeFoor playing by giving them a free pass?

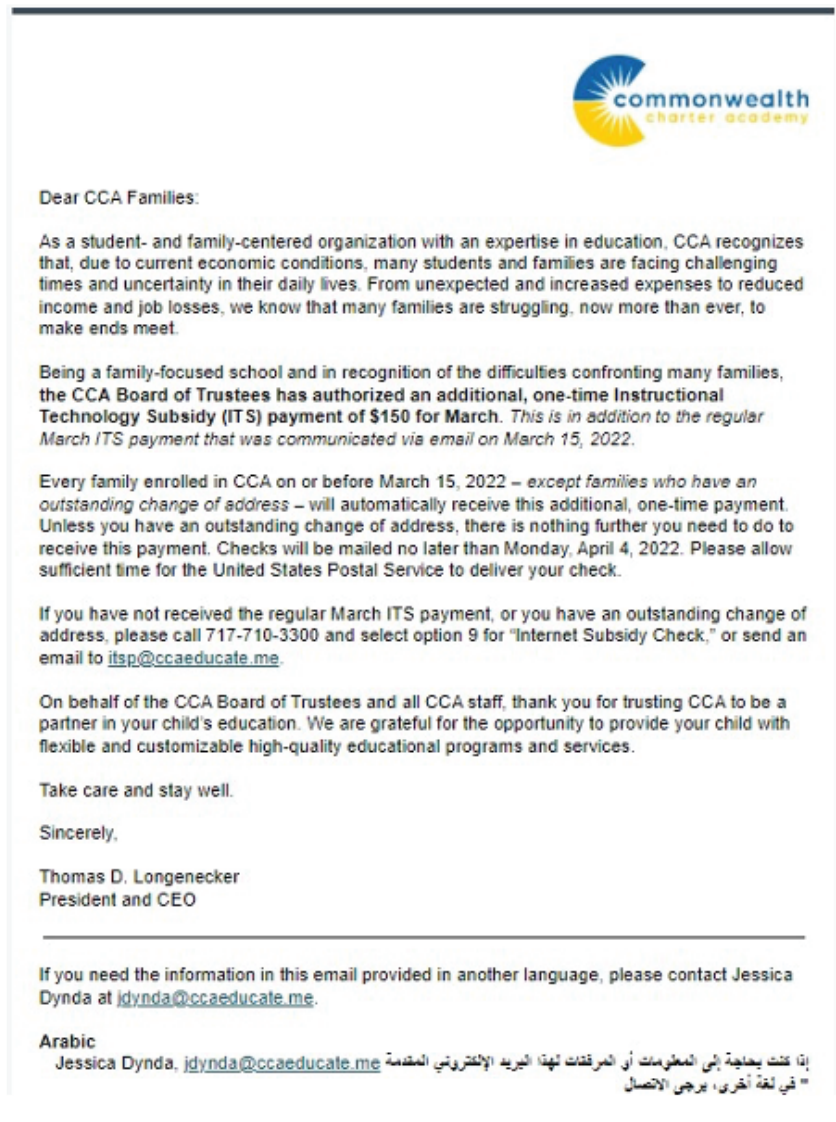
Education Voters of PA has obtained emails, reimbursement forms, and screen shots from a Commonwealth Charter Academy Facebook page that reveal CCA, Pennsylvania's largest cyber charter school with an enrollment of nearly 20,000 students, is using tax dollars to:

- Send every family a cash payment of \$150 (March 25, 2022)
- Provide a \$250 "community class" cash reimbursement for each student enrolled
- Provide a \$200 "personal field trip" cash reimbursement for each student enrolled

Facebook posts in a CCA parent page show families discussing spending tax dollars provided by CCA to:

- Purchase meals and games Dave and Busters arcade
- Attend a Motley Crue concert
- Take a trip to Austria
- Buy Eagles tickets
- Take family vacations to Universal Studios and Disney
- Pay for scuba, ski, and horseback riding lessons

So, why won't Auditor General Timothy DeFoor immediately open an audit of CCA to investigate these eye-popping abuses of taxpayer dollars? CCA has not been audited by the state in nearly a decade and with an annual budget expected to top \$250 million in 2022-2023, with no state oversight, and as evidenced by public social media posts the waste, fraud and abuse of tax dollars is extraordinary.



Are cyber charter schools playing games with Pennsylvania tax dollars?

TRIPS & PAYMENTS



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