



## Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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# AMSD Position on Charter Schools

**The Department of Education should be directed to identify which, if any, exemptions from state law or rule allow charter schools to increase student achievement or increase efficiencies. The Governor and Legislature should extend any identified exemptions to all school districts. In addition, the State should fully reimburse school districts for the cost of providing transportation and special education services to charter school students.**

### AMSD BELIEVES

- Students and families are best served when charter schools are held to the same high standards applied to school districts.
- The State should fully reimburse school districts for the costs related to providing transportation and special education services to charter school students.

### BACKGROUND

The first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992. A key motivation behind establishing charter schools was the opportunity for charters to serve as labs of innovation to try new instructional strategies and models that, if successful, could be replicated by school districts throughout the state. According to the charter school law (124E.01), the purpose of charter schools is to:

- 1) increasing learning opportunities for all pupils;
- 2) encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- 3) measuring learning outcomes and creating different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes;
- 4) establishing new forms of accountability for schools; or
- 5) creating new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.

Charter schools are exempt from many state statutes and rules applicable to school districts to allow them to pursue these goals. However, the state does not collect best practices data from charter schools or examine whether freedom from certain state statutes and rules has allowed charter schools to accomplish their achievement goals.

Under current law, charter schools bill a special education student's resident school district for eligible unreimbursed special education costs. Prior to FY 2015, charter schools were able to bill back 100 percent of eligible unreimbursed costs. Beginning in FY 2015, charter schools may bill back no more than 90 percent of eligible unreimbursed costs, unless at least 90 percent of the charter schools' students qualify for special education costs in which case the full 100 percent may be billed back to the resident school district. This has a tremendous financial impact on school districts. In FY 2016, AMSD districts spent almost \$36 million of their general education revenue on special education costs for resident students attending charter schools. According to the Minnesota Department of Education's FY 2016 special education cross-subsidy report, AMSD member school districts are redirecting an average of \$964 per weighted pupil of general education revenue to cover unreimbursed special education costs. In comparison, the average per pupil cross-subsidy for charter schools is just \$88.

Similarly, school districts are required to provide transportation services for any resident student attending a charter school if the charter school chooses to not provide transportation services. School districts must use general education revenue to cover any unreimbursed transportation costs.