

Policy Update

U.S. House Passes Charter Schools Bill with Overwhelming Bipartisan Support

September 13, 2011— The U.S. House of Representatives passed the *Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act of 2011* (H.R. 2218) today with overwhelming bipartisan support by a vote of 365-54. This is the first bill to pass either chamber of the U.S. Congress as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. H.R. 2218 was introduced by Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA). Strong leadership by Chairman John Kline (R-MN) and Ranking Member George Miller (D-CA) ensured its success.

Prior to the final passage of the bill, the House resoundingly defeated an amendment introduced by Representative King (R-IA) that would have significantly reduced accountability for achievement gains for all groups of children. A number of organizations, including state charter associations, were instrumental in defeating this amendment. Details on this amendment can be [found here](#).

Major Provisions

- **Grants for Opening New Charter Schools, Replication and Expansion:** H.R. 2218 updates the [charter school start-up grants to state education agencies](#), which run subgrant competitions to open charter schools. In previous years, funds were accessible only for the creation of new schools. While this was appropriate when the charter movement was launched, there is now evidence about what works well—and what doesn't—and this bill supports replication and expansion of models that are successful. This legislation encourages states to provide grants to replicate and expand the most high-quality public charter schools, while still opening new schools and supporting innovative models. It also expands the definition of a state eligible entity to include a state charter school board or a governor of a state.
- **Grants for Facilities:** H.R. 2218 also updates and streamlines the two current charter facilities aid programs. The [State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program](#) incentivizes states to establish or enhance per-pupil facilities aid programs. The [Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program](#) leverages private investment in charter facilities financing, making it easier for

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charter schools to get loans for purchasing, leasing or improving facilities.

- **Grants for Evaluating Impact and Sharing Best Practices:** Public charter schools continue to demonstrate ways to improve student achievement and better serve all students. H.R. 2218 ensures timely evaluations of charter schools' impact on students, families and communities. It also supports the dissemination of best practices between public charters and traditional public schools.

Next Steps

The U.S. Senate education committee is meeting regularly to consider comprehensive changes to the ESEA. Once a charter bill is introduced and passed in the Senate, the House and Senate will convene to reconcile differences between the bills and a bill will be sent to the President for signature.

Additional Materials

- [NAPCS Press Release](#)
- [Organization Sign-On Letter Opposing the King Amendment](#)
- [New York Times](#) article "With Bipartisan Support, Law on Expansion of Charter Schools Passes the House"
- [Education Week](#) article "House Gives Bipartisan Stamp of Approval to Charter Bill"