

REFERENCE TITLE: charter schools; 25th anniversary recognition

State of Arizona
House of Representatives
Fifty-fourth Legislature
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2019

HCR 2025

Introduced by
Representative Campbell

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARIZONA'S CHARTER SCHOOL LAW.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Whereas, charter schools, established by law in Arizona in 1994,
2 provide choice; and

3 Whereas, according to the Arizona Republic website, azcentral.com,
4 185,889 students or 17% of Arizona public school students attended a
5 charter school in 2017; and

6 Whereas, the Arizona Charter Schools Association (ACSA) has found
7 that the diversity of the charter school student population is continually
8 growing. In 2017, 55% of charter school students were of an ethnic
9 background and 45% of students were white; and

10 Whereas, charter schools deliver quality education that is
11 accessible to students of all academic abilities and interests, and
12 provide programs focused on STEM, expeditionary learning, the arts, the
13 Montessori method, autism and at-risk students; and

14 Whereas, approximately 20% of charter schools are alternative
15 schools that serve dropout, homeless and overaged students. Arizona law
16 does not allow charter schools to choose specific students; rather,
17 charter schools are required to enroll all students through a lottery or
18 other equitable system; and

19 Whereas, according to the ACSA, charter schools saved the state \$2.7
20 billion dollars in per pupil expenditures in comparison to district
21 schools from 1996 to 2017; and

22 Whereas, charter schools raised the achievement of students in
23 Arizona in 2015, according to the ACSA. Charter school students
24 outperformed the state average passing rate for English/Language Arts and
25 math tests by 5 to 12 percentage points in every grade level. For both
26 types of exams, 49 of the top 50 local education agencies were charter
27 schools; and

28 Whereas, in 2015, students who were homeless or economically
29 disadvantaged and attended charter schools had limited English
30 proficiency, and charter school students with disabilities scored higher
31 than their district-school peers on the English and math exams; and

32 Whereas, approximately 27%, or 148, of Arizona's charter schools
33 were "A" rated schools in 2018, according to the Arizona Department of
34 Education (ADE) grading system; and

35 Whereas, charter schools are strictly regulated and highly
36 accountable to more regulatory agencies than district schools because they
37 operate as public schools and businesses. Charter schools are under a
38 specific charter contract in which they can be and, in some cases have
39 been, closed by the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (Board) for
40 not performing academically or financially; and

41 Whereas, ADE regulations include special education requirements,
42 budget and annual financial report proposals, adoption and publication
43 requirements, attendance reporting, grants management, course offering,
44 fingerprint clearance card and resume publication, calendar approval,

1 emergency response plans, graduation requirements, A-F grading and student
2 testing and accountability; and

3 Whereas, Board regulations include an annual financial audit and
4 statement, an annual compliance audit, including nondiscrimination,
5 policies and procedures, financial and performance dashboard regulations,
6 five-year on-site audits, approval of any expansion or change request in
7 operation or governance and their specific charter contracts; and

8 Whereas, the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records
9 regulates charter schools' records-retention policies and procedures; and

10 Whereas, charter schools have the same facilities requirements as
11 district schools, including compliance and inspection requirements such as
12 fire, health department, pest management, the Arizona Department of
13 Environmental Quality, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration,
14 the Environmental Protection Agency, asbestos management and material
15 safety data sheet regulations, yet charter schools do not have access to
16 state facilities funding; and

17 Whereas, business regulation and accountability exceed district
18 school requirements, which include annual filings with the Arizona
19 Corporation Commission, United States Department of Labor, Attorney
20 General and United States Department of Revenue for an annual tax return
21 as a for-profit or nonprofit organization; and

22 Whereas, on January 11, 2016, the late Senator John McCain said
23 "results from Arizona demonstrate the benefits of innovation in the
24 classroom. In fact, if Arizona's 170,000 public charter students were
25 measured as an individual state, that state would have ranked second
26 nationally... Something powerful is happening in Arizona's charter
27 schools."

28 Therefore

29 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona,
30 the Senate concurring:

31 That the Members of the Legislature recognize the 25th anniversary
32 of the Arizona charter school law and commend charter schools for their
33 tremendous efforts in providing quality education to Arizona's children.