



Lift the Cap

Ensuring equal access to a high quality education is not only a social responsibility – it is a critical economic issue as well. The future of our children is the future of our economy.

Please Support H4108 *An Act Relative to Improving Student Achievement*

The Massachusetts House of Representatives has passed H4108, An Act Relative to Improving Student Achievement, to lift the current cap on charter schools in the lowest performing districts. The bill is now before the Massachusetts Senate.

ABOUT THE “LIFT THE CAP” CAMPAIGN:

- The campaign is an effort to remove restrictions on charter public school growth in Massachusetts.
- Lifting the cap ensures equal access to quality education for all students, especially those in highest need.
- As of May 2014, there were nearly 45,000 students statewide on charter public school waiting lists, including more than 20,000 in Boston alone. In one year, this is a 15% increase statewide and a 30% increase in Boston. There is tremendous demand for charter public schools that cannot be met by current restrictions.¹
- Charter public schools in Massachusetts have demonstrated strong educational outcomes, serving all students regardless of race, socio-economic background, academic history, or special education needs.
 - Charter school students in Boston, Lawrence, Holyoke, Springfield and other urban areas, where charters serve a mostly low income families and children of color, are ranking among the highest in the state on MCAS.
 - Among Boston charter public high schools, special education enrollment is higher than the district average, and the highest performing charter public schools have higher special education populations than the highest performing district schools.
 - Boston charter public schools have a more stable enrollment than Boston district schools, with less frequent student transfers throughout the year and from year to year.

ABOUT THE PENDING LEGISLATION:

The proposed legislation would allow more charter schools in the lowest performing 10% of districts by increasing the current cap on charter school tuition from 18% to 23% of a district’s net school spending. The cap lift would be phased-in, beginning with an increase to 19% in fiscal year 2018 and increasing 1% each year thereafter until reaching 23% in 2022. In order to have applications approved to go above the 18% current cap, charter schools must meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) Use an **“opt-out” lottery process** to enroll students – This means that all students who live in the district would be eligible to attend the charter school and, therefore, automatically included in the charter school

¹ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Massachusetts Charter School [Fact Sheet](#)

lottery. Parents of selected students would be notified and they would have the option to “opt-out” if they are not interested in their child attending the charter school; **or**

(2) The school is specifically designed to serve **at-risk students and/or dropouts** – this means that 75% or more of students enrolled in the school must qualify as at-risk students or been former drop-outs.

In addition, the legislation stipulates:

- New charters issued under these provisions shall be required to backfill all grades.
- Preference for new charters will be granted to those who have a collaborative relationship with their sending district.
- The Board can give preference to expansion applications submitted by existing charter schools that have an average 3-year attrition rate that is equal to or less than the average 3-year attrition rate of schools within the sending districts.
- Expansion applications submitted by exiting charter schools that have an average 3-year attrition rate that is greater than the average 3-year attrition rate of the schools within the sending district shall include a plan to reduce the attrition rates in said charters.

If H4108 becomes law, it will allow charters to serve more of the state’s waiting list children in underperforming school districts that are either at the current cap or creeping closer and closer to it every year.

Communities currently at their cap:

- Boston
- Chelsea
- Fall River
- Greenfield
- Holyoke
- North Adams

Communities currently close to their cap:

- Fitchburg
- Lawrence
- New Bedford
- Randolph
- Salem

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