



Setting the Record Straight on Public Charter and Renaissance Schools' Inclusion in A4496/S3247

Myth: *Public charter schools are private schools and shouldn't have access to public funding for school buildings.*

Fact: Public charter and renaissance schools are public schools! They are tuition-free public schools run by non-profit organizations open to all students. There are no tests, entrance exams or other special requirements for admission to charter or renaissance schools. The inclusion of these schools in A4496/S3247 fundamentally comes down to the issue of EQUITY and FAIRNESS. The students who attend charter schools are the same students who attend traditional district schools. They are friends, neighbors and in many cases, siblings.

- 91% of public charter school students in Schools Development Authority (SDA) districts (New Jersey's 31 poorest school districts) are students of color.
- 77% of public charter students in SDA districts qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.
- 90% of public charter school students attend schools in SDA districts.

Public Charter and Renaissance Schools educate 1 in 5 students in New Jersey's SDA Districts.

Myth: *Including public charter and renaissance schools in A4496/S3247 will take money from SDA schools.*

Fact: The bill creates 4 funds — each intended to support projects for different types of public schools: the Schools Development Authority District Project Fund, the Regular Operating District (RODs) Construction and Maintenance Grants Fund, the SDA District Emergent Project Fund, and the Charter School and Renaissance School Project Construction and Maintenance Fund. A4496/S3247 does not actually authorize funding for school construction; it will give charters and renaissance schools access to potential future funding, which will be determined by lawmakers. And again, charter and renaissance schools will have their own separate fund, like what has been created for RODs or previously for vocational schools.

Myth: *Public charter and renaissance schools will get new school buildings before SDA district needs are met.*

Fact: A separate project prioritization list is included in the bill for public charter and renaissance schools. The project list prioritizes capital maintenance projects before new construction and renovations, mirroring the list currently in use for RODs. Also, SDA districts have a separate project priority list which prioritizes new construction. Realistically, public charter schools will get new roofs and boilers before they ever get a new school.

#SameKidsSameNeeds

Myth: *Charters schools will have access to more funding and/or projects than SDA Districts.*

Fact: The bill expressly states that at least 50 percent of future appropriations for school construction must be awarded to SDA districts. It does not state how much, if any, future appropriations will be dedicated to public charter or renaissance schools.

Myth: *Including public charter and renaissance schools in A4496/SS3247 is a violation of the Abbott Court cases.*

Fact: Public charter and renaissance school facility funding DOES NOT violate Abbott case law. The Abbott case law on school facilities does not specifically include charter and renaissance schools, but it DOES NOT PROHIBIT charter or renaissance schools from receiving state funding either. Similarly, the Abbott court cases did not include or specify that ROD or vocational schools should be funded, but the State has been funding ROD and vocational school facilities projects since 2000.

Myth: *Including charter schools and renaissance schools will benefit private, for-profit developers and landlords.*

Fact: Under the bill, public charter and renaissance schools that lease buildings from for-profit/private providers will NOT be eligible for state funding for school construction; only charters and renaissance schools that lease from non-profits or government entities will be eligible for school construction grants. Additionally, the SDA and the New Jersey Department of Education have oversight over the grant approval process.

Myth: *Public charter schools are closed frequently so public investment in charter facilities is wasteful.*

Fact: Only public charter and renaissance schools with a proven track record of operational and academic success (who have been through at least one renewal cycle) will be eligible for state funding for school construction. Additionally, charter schools do not close frequently. Under Governor Murphy, 98% of public charter schools have been renewed. Charters are closed when they struggle academically and struggling charters will not receive funding for school construction. Lastly, under the bill, in the highly unlikely scenario where a charter school who received school construction funding is closed, the district will have right of first refusal of the school facilities project prior to reversion to the State. Therefore, the school facility will remain a public asset.

Myth: *Charter and renaissance schools do not have the same level of need for school construction improvements as SDA districts because they are not faced with over-crowding.*

Fact: Public charter schools are dealing with aging infrastructure in most of their schools, and across charter and renaissance schools, there is over \$900 million in unmet health and safety facility needs. In addition, there are over 28,000 students on wait lists across the State for public charter and renaissance schools. Charters would face even greater facilities challenges if these students were served.

*Updated on 3/6/2023

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