

NJPCSA Launches #SameKidsSameNeeds

Fair Facilities Funding Campaign

Thousands Demand Lawmakers Support Public Charter School Facilities Funding

NEW JERSEY - May 9, 2023 – Today, the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA) launched its campaign calling on state lawmakers to support facilities funding for 66,000 students in public charter and renaissance schools. Public charter and renaissance schools do not receive funding for their school buildings despite educating one in five public school students in the state’s 31 poorest communities.

Since April, thousands of community members have sent more than 466,000 email messages to Governor Murphy and the Legislature in support of bill A4496/S3247, which creates a framework for future school construction projects, including district, charter, and renaissance schools. For the first time, the bill would make public charter and renaissance schools eligible to receive state support for facilities projects.

“This campaign is fundamentally about fairness and equity for all public school students because the students who attend public charter and renaissance schools are the same as those who attend district schools: they are friends, neighbors and, in many cases, siblings,” **said Harry Lee, President and CEO of NJPCSA.** “Every public school student deserves to learn in a safe, healthy and secure school building.”

The #SameKidsSameNeeds campaign features [three social media ads](#) highlighting voices of charter school leaders, teachers, and parents in Paterson, Newark and Jersey City, calling on lawmakers to equitably fund school buildings for all public school students.

The aim of the campaign is to bring attention to the specific facility needs of charter schools. According to a [recent survey](#), across charter and renaissance schools, there is over \$900 million in unmet health and safety facility needs over the next decade. Facility needs include a wide range of projects from boiler and air system upgrades to new facilities to address school capacity issues.

“An overwhelming majority of students attending public charter schools in New Jersey reside in low-income communities that have immense educational challenges and yet charter school students are thriving, in large part, because of the support they receive from their school,” **said T.J. Best, NJPCSA Senior Advisor.** “We need to look beyond school labels and recognize these are all of our kids and support parents' choices by ensuring every public school building creates an ideal environment for learning.”

The campaign calls attention to the makeup of students who attend charter schools, including:

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

“Just like our district peers, public charter schools like Link Community Charter School need to upgrade facilities, improve accessibility and create space in old school buildings,” **said Maria Paradiso, Head of School at Link Community Charter School in Newark.** “But unlike district schools, we do not have access to state funding, forcing us to pull dollars away from students in the classroom. I hope this campaign cuts through the noise and misinformation and shows the public that charter schools do, in fact, serve the same kids with the same needs.”

“My child attends a public charter school in Paterson in a building constructed when Andrew Jackson was president and before I could even vote,” **said Noel Johnson, whose child attends Philip’s Academy Charter School in Paterson.** “It’s unfair that my child’s school doesn’t have access to state funding for a building that is nearly two hundred years old. It’s time for Trenton lawmakers to end this inequity and provide facility funding for my public school child.”

For more information about the #SameKidsSameNeeds campaign and to view the videos, visit www.facilitiesfunding4allkids.org and follow the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association

The New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA) is the non-profit membership association that represents the state’s charter school community and, by extension, charter school students and their parents. There are currently 87 charter schools in New Jersey serving nearly 60,000 students. We are committed to advancing quality public education for New Jersey’s children through the cultivation of excellent public charter schools. The Association seeks to influence legislative and policy environments, leverage collective advocacy, and provide resources to support our members in developing and operating high quality, public charter schools.

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