



NJ CHARTER SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

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TRENTON, PATERSON, NEWARK AND CAMDEN PARENTS JOIN STATE CHARTER ASSOCIATION AND ASK SUPREME COURT TO INCLUDE CHARTER AND RENAISSANCE SCHOOLS IN COURT-ORDERED PLAN FOR SCHOOL FACILITIES FUNDING

Group Calls On State To Fund ALL Public School Construction Needs in Low-Income Cities, Including Nearly 20 Percent of Students Who Attend Charter or Renaissance Schools

NEW JERSEY – On Monday, a group of parents from Trenton, Paterson, Newark, and Camden joined with the state’s charter school association to file briefs with the New Jersey Supreme Court in the long-running Abbott v. Burke line of cases. The group filed “Friends of the Court” or “Amicus” briefs asking the state’s highest court to add public charter and renaissance school student needs to any court-ordered plan for school construction funding, and thereby bring more funding to their cities.

“Every student in our city deserves a safe, healthy school building to learn in,” **said Charlotte Tullo, whose children attend Foundation Academy in Trenton.** “We are fighting for our cities to get all of the funding they deserve, for all of our cities’ public schools.”

“Parents don’t care who runs their public school, they just want it to be a safe, healthy place to learn,” **said Harry Lee, President of the New Jersey Charter Schools Association** which filed a complementary amicus brief on the same day as the parents. “Cities like Paterson, Trenton, and Newark have changed in the 20 years since this case was decided, and our funding system should keep up with the times.”

In the 1980s and 1990s, the New Jersey courts ruled that the education provided to children in poor communities throughout the state was “constitutionally substandard”. This created the first “Abbott districts” - school districts that the state was required to fund at the average of the level of the state’s wealthiest districts. Today, these districts are known as “SDA districts”, because the state’s School Development Authority is required to cover the costs of all school building projects within these districts.

The briefs demonstrate that in the two decades since the Abbott school construction funding case was first decided, public charter and renaissance schools were created and now educate nearly one out of every five students in these cities. The briefs argue that all public schools located in these former Abbott Districts should receive the funding they need for school buildings and doing so will bring more resources to those cities.

The state charter school association pointed out that no changes to state laws are needed for charter schools to use these funds for repair and renovate school buildings, but also called for state rules banning charters from using state funds for “new construction” to be lifted in order to meet the needs of students in these cities.

The table below outlines how much the cities highlighted in the parents’ brief have changed since this case was first decided by the state supreme court in 1998:

District	1998-99	2018-19
Camden Charter Enrollment	472	4,962
Camden City District & Renaissance School Enrollment	18,536	11,794
Camden Public Schools Total Enrollment	19,008	16,756
Camden Percent Charter (%)	2.4%	29.6%
Paterson Charter Enrollment	-	4,287
Paterson City District Schools Enrollment	24,499	24,860
Paterson Public Schools Total Enrollment	24,499	29,147
Paterson Percent Charter (%)	-	14.7%
Newark Charter Enrollment	259	18,477
Newark District Enrollment	43,609	35,664
Newark Public Schools Total Enrollment	43,868	54,141
Newark Percent Charter (%)	0.006%	34.1%
Trenton Charter Enrollment	981	2,880
Trenton District Enrollment	11,971	11,923
Trenton Public Schools Total Enrollment	12,952	14,803
Trenton Percent Charter (%)	7.6%	19.5%

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About New Jersey Charter Schools Association

The New Jersey Charter Schools Association (NJCSA) is a statewide association representing the state's charter sector. New Jersey is home to 88 charter schools, serving more than 54,500 children. NJCSA was formed in 1999 and today is charged with advancing a quality public education for New Jersey's children through quality public charter schools. Our vision is that every child in the State of New Jersey has the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school that best meets his or her needs. For more information, visit www.njcharters.org.