THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR FULL TIME VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS

PRESENTATION TO THE NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
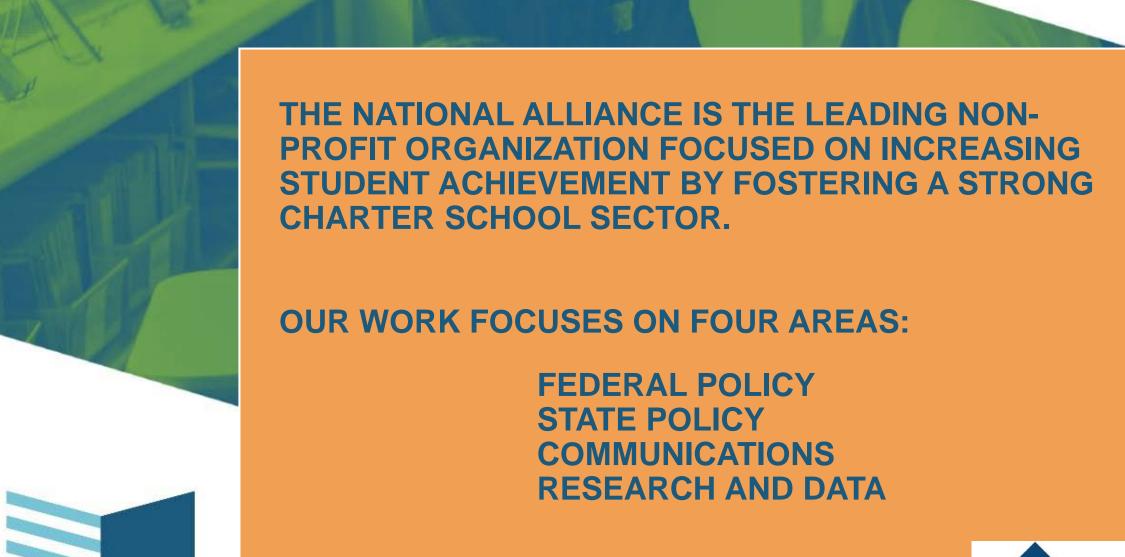
DECEMBER 13, 2018

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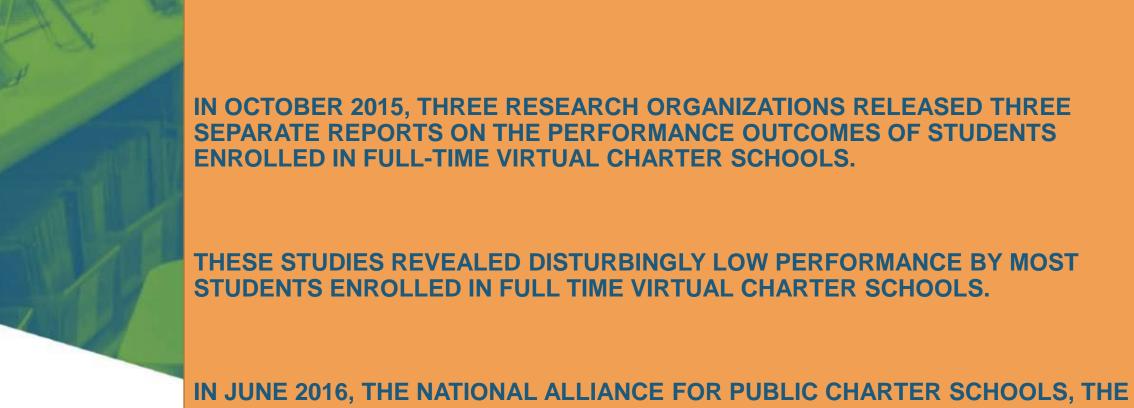NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS of NEW MEXICO

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE IS THE LEADING NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT BY FOSTERING A STRONG CHARTER SCHOOL SECTOR.

OUR WORK FOCUSES ON FOUR AREAS:

> **FEDERAL POLICY**
> **STATE POLICY**
> **COMMUNICATIONS**
> **RESEARCH AND DATA**

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS of NEW MEXICO

IN OCTOBER 2015, THREE RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS RELEASED THREE SEPARATE REPORTS ON THE PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FULL-TIME VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS.

THESE STUDIES REVEALED DISTURBINGLY LOW PERFORMANCE BY MOST STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FULL TIME VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS.

IN JUNE 2016, THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS AND 50 CAN RELEASED A REPORT OUTLINING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF FULL TIME VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS.

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS of **NEW MEXICO**

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE RESPECTFULLY REQUESTS THAT THE LESC ENDORSE THE FOLLOWING STATUTORY FRAMEWORK OF OUR PROPOSED 2019 BILL.
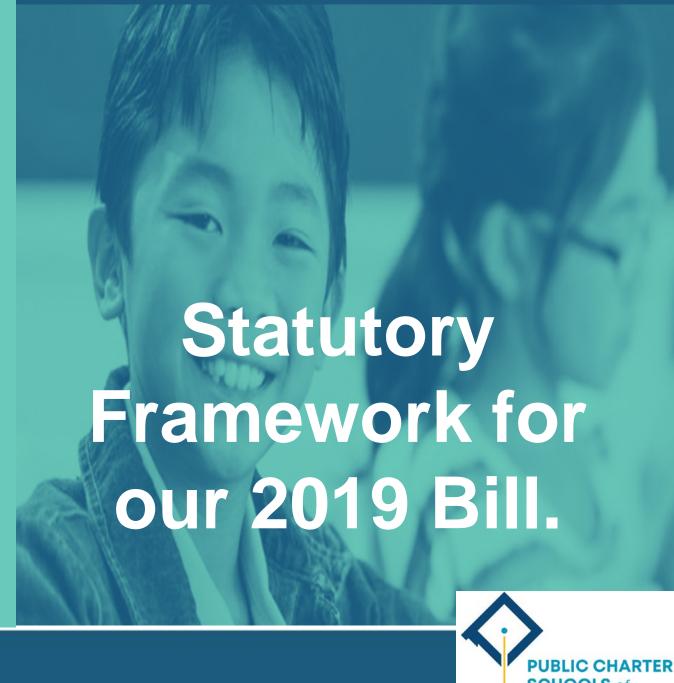
THIS FRAMEWORK ALSO ALIGNS WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE JOINT REPORT ON FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, GOVERNANCE AND STUDENT OUTCOMES IN VIRTUAL CHARTER SCHOOLS THAT THE LFC AND LESC PUBLISHED IN DECEMBER 2017.

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS of NEW MEXICO

❖ **The following statutory framework is tailored to address the disturbingly poor performance of many full-time virtual charter schools in New Mexico and across the country.**

❖ **We do not support applying this framework to brick-and-mortar charter schools and blended learning charter schools.**

Statutory Framework for our 2019 Bill.

AUTHORIZING OPTIONS

❖ Only permit the PEC to authorize full-time virtual charter schools that enroll students from more than one district. (Maine uses this approach.)

❖ Allow local school districts to authorize full-time virtual charter schools that only enroll students living in their districts.

❖ Limit authorizing fees for statewide full-time virtual charter schools to 1% (instead of the usual 2%).

ENROLLMENT LEVELS

❖ Require an enrollment cap for the full-time virtual charter schools for each year of a charter school's contract. (Maine is a leader in this area.)

❖ Enrollment levels should not exceed a certain number of students per school in any given year, and should only be increased based on academic performance outlined in the charter contract and as agreed to by the authorizer.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE

❖ Create a performance framework specific to full time virtual charter schools that includes **additional, virtual school-specific goals** regarding student enrollment, attendance, engagement, achievement, truancy, attrition, finances, and operations.

❖ These goals should be outlined in the charter application (if a school intends to contract with a virtual school provider) and negotiated as part of the charter contract.

❖ These goals are **in addition to the rigorous goals** that every charter school contract should contain.

❖ The authorizer should make renewal and closure decisions based upon schools' achievement of the goals in their contracts.

FUNDING

❖ Require full-time virtual charter school operators to propose and justify student funding levels in their charter school applications, taking into account the direct costs associated with teacher pay, school maintenance, facility costs and professional development. This amount should be negotiated as part of charter contract negotiations.

❖ Require additional components for all full-time virtual charter applications to ensure more transparency around contract amount and extent of services if a full-time virtual charter school intends to contract with a for-profit entity to provide the majority of services (curriculum, professional development, board development, etc.)

❖ Create a funding mechanism that allows for full SEG funding only after course completion. Course completion could be measured by passing an end-of-year test or by completing a course with a passing grade.

❖ Course completion must be attached to a passing grade, such as an end of course exam or credits earned.

Completion Based Funding Considerations

❖ Focuses on the successful completion of curriculum with initial SEG payment up front and then final payment on completion.

❖ **Strengths**: Ties funding to a completion of course work for a student incentivizing schools to ensure students finish course work.

❖ **Weakness**: Could incentivize schools to "pass" students simply to receive funding or to only take students they believe are capable of passing courses.

❖ **For Full-Time Virtual Charter Schools**: Creates a direct link to an outcome for funding and helps to incentivize completion in a sector where students leave at higher rates and show very poor performance.

National Studies on Full Time Virtual Charter Schools

1. Gill, Brian, Lucas Walsh, Claire Smither Wulsin, Holly Matulewicz, Veronica Severn, Eric Gau, Amanda Lee, and Tess Kerwin, *Inside Online Charter Schools,* Cambridge, MA: Matematica Policy Research, 2015.

2. Pazhouh, Rosa, Robin Lake, and Larry Miller, *The Policy Framework for Online Charter Schools,* Bothell, WA: Center for Reinventing Public Education, October 2015.

3. Woodworth, James, Margaret Raymond, Kurt Chirbas, Maribel Gonzalez, Yohannes Negassi, Will Snow, and Christine Van Donge, *Online Charter School Study,* Stanford, CA: Stanford University, October 2015.

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