



## 2026 Legislative Platform

New Mexico's public charter schools consistently outperform traditional schools in literacy, math, and science. Families choose them because they deliver on the promise of public education and help students reach their full potential. From high-performing academic models to re-engagement schools offering a second chance, charters show that equity and excellence can go hand in hand. PCSNM is advancing a focused agenda to strengthen this success

**1. Public Charter School Facilities.** Access to adequate, affordable facilities remains one of the greatest challenges facing New Mexico's public charter schools. Charter schools lack access to the most impactful property tax funding and receive lease assistance that covers less than 2/3 of the actual cost of facilities. As a result, they must redirect classroom dollars toward rent or facility costs, creating a structural disadvantage that limits the impact of our charter sector.

**Proposed actions include:**

- Attach an annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment to Lease Assistance funding to grow the amount schools are covered for and allow for stable facility finance planning.
- Appropriate an additional \$20 million to the Charter School Revolving Loan Fund, administered by the NMFA, to unlock federal matching funds and expand access to public charter school facilities statewide.
- Allow the NMFA and the Public Project Revolving Fund (PPRF) to lend directly to charter school foundations for facility acquisition and development.
- Propose standard local match (10%-20%).

**2. Budget.** Equitable and predictable funding is essential for stable school operations, yet public charter schools continue to absorb pass-through costs and inconsistent statewide implementations that drain classroom dollars and widen funding gaps.

**Proposed actions include:**

- Fully fund statewide student information systems. Cover all SIS rollout and subscription costs at the state level to prevent new pass-through expenses.
- Protect school budgets from rising health-care costs by funding the employer share outside the SEG. Premiums are increasing faster than the formula can keep up, so covering the employer share with direct payments to NMPSIA prevents cuts to staff and programs.
- Move dollars above-the-line by shifting below-the-line (BtL) funding into the SEG for predictable, equitable support. Our current formula rewards underperformance and penalizes excellence, offering no incentive for schools—or the system—to improve.
- Update core formula components. Increase basic program revenues and modernize the outdated grade-level cost differential—unchanged for nearly 50 years—to reflect today's real operating costs and reduce reliance on unreliable BtL funding.

**3. Board of Finance for Locally Authorized Charter Schools.** Currently, locally authorized charter schools do not act as their own Board of Finance, creating a complex fiscal relationship with their authorizing districts. As a result, these schools must rely on their local school district as a pass-through entity for all their funds and independently apply for below-the-line grant funding through the NMPED and must instead rely on inclusion in district applications. This dependency undermines the autonomy guaranteed by the Charter Schools Act and restricts access to state programs and funds in ways that are inconsistent with each school’s mission and operational systems. The arrangement disadvantages locally authorized charter schools—many serving historically underserved Martinez/Yazzie student groups—and limits the reach of schools that consistently outperform district counterparts in literacy, math, and science.

**Proposed actions include:**

- Amend the Public School Finance Act (22-8-1 through 22-8-46) to designate the governing council of each locally authorized charter school as a board of finance for the purpose of receiving and distributing public school funds.
  - This would allow locally authorized charter schools to receive funding just as state-authorized charter schools do, provide more transparency in their audits, and provide more autonomy in the additional funds they seek to improve programming for students.

**4. At Risk Hold Harmless Funding.** HB63 (2025) changed the way at-risk units are calculated and how those funds are dispersed at the school level. HB63 (2025) contained a flawed hold harmless clause. The clause did not include enough funding (only \$1M) to cover a phased-out approach over a reasonable timeframe nor was the language explicit enough in directing the NMPED to disperse the funds to districts and public charter school impacted by the at-risk funding formula change. As a result, schools that most needed the hold harmless funding received little to no relief.

**Proposed actions include:**

- Direct NMPED to provide hold harmless solely based on the units lost for the changes to the at-risk index pursuant to HB63.
- Allocation of sufficient hold harmless funds to be dispersed to impacted districts and public charter schools over a 3-year period consistent with the following schedule:
  - 100% of the difference in FY26 (\$12M via emergency supplemental)
  - 66% of the difference in FY27 (\$8M)
  - 33% of the difference in FY28 (\$4M)

**5. Transportation Funding & Charter–District Partnerships**

Reliable transportation is essential for student access, especially for low-income, rural, and Native students, but New Mexico’s framework makes it difficult for charter schools to secure services. Statute (§22-8-29 NMSA) requires PED to calculate transportation allocations solely on prior-year data, a 2015 change that eliminated funding for new routes in their first year and leaves districts and charters to absorb unfunded costs.

**Proposed actions include:**

- Authorize current-year provisional allocations for new-to-the-system routes, mileage, or ridership.
- Provide clear language and incentives to make district/charter collaboration a reality on transportation services.