A Call to Action to Improve the Quality of Full-Time Virtual Charter Public Schools" *

State Policy Recommendations

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National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS)

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Policy Options for Full-Time Virtual Charter Schools

- These policy options are tailored to the unique problems that have emerged among too many full-time virtual charter schools, problems that call for **states to enact significant policy changes** for these schools.

- These policy options fall into four categories:

    1. Authorizing

    2. Enrollment Criteria

    3. Funding

    4. Accountability for Performance

Policy Options for Full-Time Virtual Charter Schools

- The NAPCS supports full-time virtual schooling as an option for families.

- However, we believe that states need to enact significant policy changes to improve the performance of full-time virtual schools. In some cases, these policy changes are better enacted through a new law that only governs full-time virtual charter schools.

- We **do not support these policy options for brick-and-mortar charter schools or blended learning charter schools,** which make use of both brick-and-mortar and online settings.

Policy Options for Authorizing Structures

Authorizing Structure

❑ States should only permit authorizers that have been granted **statewide** chartering authority to oversee full-time virtual charter schools that enroll students from more than one district.

❑ Maine, Colorado and Oklahoma have enacted this policy.

Authorizing Structure

❑ States should allow districts to authorize full-time virtual charter schools that enroll students only from **within** their districts.

Authorizing Structure

❑ States should cap the amount of authorizing fees that an authorizer can withhold from a full-time virtual charter school.

❑ These above options will help ensure that only authorizers with the right expertise and capacity can

Policy Options for Enrollment Levels and Criteria

Enrollment Criteria

❑ States should initially maintain a core principle that full-time virtual charter schools, like all other types of charter schools, must be open and serve all students.

Enrollment Criteria

❑ However, should data and other measures show that interventions are unable to make full-time virtual charter schools successful for all students, states should study the possibility of creating **criteria for enrollment, such as identifying the level of daily adult support a student has outside of virtual school staff.**

❑ This change in criteria for enrollment in many states **may require that full-time virtual charter schools operate as something other than charter schools.**

Enrollment Levels

❑ States should require authorizers and schools to create desired enrollment levels for the full-time virtual charter schools in their states for each year of their charter contracts.

❑ Enrollment levels should not to exceed a certain number of students per school in any given year.

❑ Allow virtual public charter schools to grow – or not – based on performance.

Policy Options for Funding

Funding Levels Based on Costs

☐ States should require full-time virtual charter school operators to propose and justify a price per student using detailed costs as part of their charter school applications.

☐ States should seek guidance from experts and researchers in determining responsible levels of funding based on the real costs of full-time virtual charter schools.

Performance-Based Funding

❑ New Mexico (and all states) should establish valid cost levels for operating full-time virtual charter schools and fund full-time virtual charter school students via a performance-based funding system.

❑ New Mexico and all states should explore funding models for full-time virtual schools based upon progress made toward interim and annual goals, including funding based upon course completion.

❑ Florida, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Utah are experimenting with performance-based funding.

Accountability for Performance

Close Low-Performing Schools

- New Mexico's charter law currently has many of the nationally-benchmarked principles, standards and tools for authorizing, although statutory improvements to authorizing can be made.

- One issue is that authorizers are not being held accountable to statutory principles and standards and are not using available tools to close chronically low-performing full-time virtual charter schools.

Accountability for Performance

❑ New Mexico (and all states) should require authorizers and schools to jointly determine additional, virtual-specific goals regarding student enrollment, attendance, engagement, achievement, truancy, attrition, finances, and operations and to include these goals in the schools' charter contracts.

Accountability for Performance

❑ These mission-specific virtual charter school goals are in addition to the rigorous goals that every charter school contract should contain.

❑ Authorizers need to do a better job of making new, renewal and closure decisions based upon schools' achievement of the goals outlined in their contracts.

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