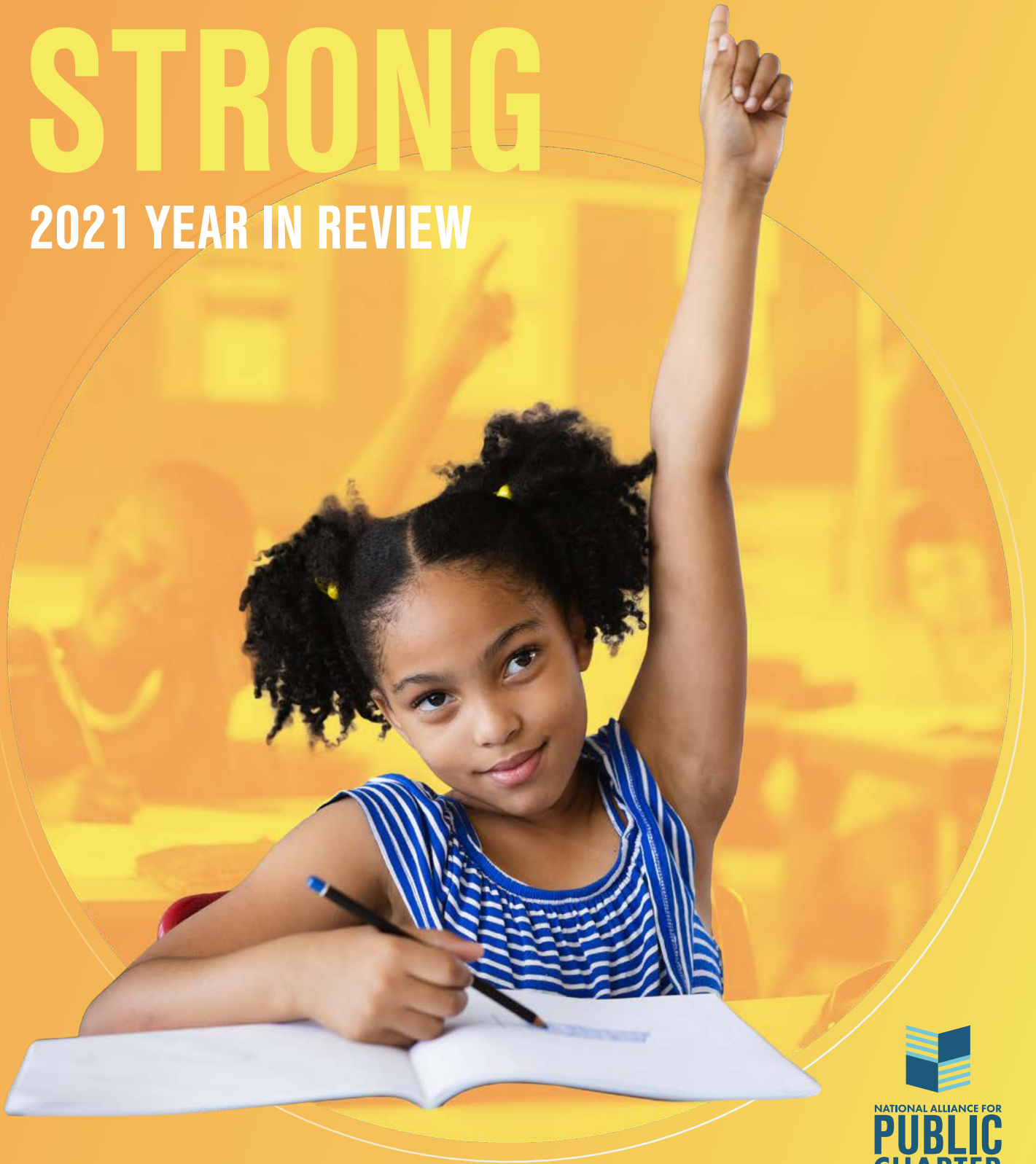


# 30 YEARS STRONG

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR  
**PUBLIC  
CHARTER  
SCHOOLS**

## MISSION

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement. Our mission is to lead public education to unprecedented levels of academic achievement by fostering a strong charter school movement.

## VISION

Our vision is that every family can choose a well-funded, high-performing public school that delivers an excellent education for their children.

## OUR VALUES

**COLLABORATION** | We work in partnership with charter school leaders, other stakeholders, and each other to achieve our collective goals.

**DIVERSITY** | We model what we ask of the movement. Our team includes talented people from a variety of backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of charter schooling and our coalitions and partners.

**MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP** | We seek to lead and serve the charter school movement by deeply understanding opportunities and challenges and anticipating and responding to the movement's needs.

**QUALITY** | We expect the best work from each other and ourselves and won't settle for anything less.

**RESULTS** | We make decisions based on evidence and judge our own work by whether it ultimately advances our mission.

**SENSE OF URGENCY** | We are urgent in pursuit of growing the number of high-quality charter schools, recognizing that for any given family, there is no time to wait.



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# A MOMENTOUS YEAR



**For 30 years the charter school movement has been a source of hope and opportunity for students across America.**

We saw this vividly in the past two years as families struggled

with educational disruptions, health challenges, and social inequities. Our schools proved they are adaptive and creative, ready to lead public education when other schools are slower to act, and eager to be vital community partners, helping families access essentials from technology and meals to vaccines.

Charter schools raised their game again and again to meet students' diverse needs. Thanks to the tireless efforts and continual innovation of charter school teachers and leaders, parents across the nation sought out charter schools in record numbers. Our 2021 report, *Voting with their Feet*, showed charter school enrollment climbing at record levels as district school enrollment dropped to historic lows.

Looking ahead, I believe charter schools are experiencing a moment of opportunity. During the 2020 elections, parents made it crystal clear they want more from the education system. Candidates are on notice that if they want to hold office, they will have to make higher-quality, more responsive public

schools a priority. This is the ground charter schools have always inhabited, and we are well positioned to harness the energy of parents to expand opportunity for students everywhere.

With unique school models dedicated to quality and personalization, charter schools offer the responsive learning environments parents want and students need. Our 30 Under 30 Changemaker Awards spotlighted how the charter school movement is developing future leaders who will shape our country and our communities. As we welcome more families into the charter movement, we must continue earning their trust and building a base of support that will serve us well for years to come.

We've already experienced the benefits of a growing and more powerful movement. Over the summer of 2021, when the U.S. House of Representatives tried to cut funding for the federal Charter Schools Program and introduced legislative text that could have threatened federal funding for all charter schools, the National Alliance rallied a nationwide coalition of supporters to reach out to their congressional delegations and advocate for their schools to protect funding. The Senate took our call to action seriously by eliminating the funding cut and the harmful language—a win for students!

Our growing coalition also defended charter school freedoms in several states, and we saw massive





charter law improvements in places where elected leaders listened to families demanding better options for students. In fact, more than 50% of the states and territories with charter school laws made improvements in 2021 in funding equity, facilities funding and access, authorization, and accountability. It was indeed the year of the charter school.

At a time of heightened political polarization, we are proud of our long tradition of bipartisan support. We continue to cultivate strong relationships with policymakers on both sides of the aisle and at all levels of government. We were honored to welcome new U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona to speak at the 2021 National Charter Schools Conference, continuing the tradition of hosting every education secretary for the past 20 years.

We know we will continue to face political roadblocks from our opponents. No matter how many families choose charter schools or how much success charter schools demonstrate, much of the education establishment fights us at every step. For all the talk of principles, these fights are often about money. Many school districts and union leaders resent parents choosing schools outside the district because the per-pupil allocation follows the student, and most charter schools are not unionized. But families are reminding them public funding belongs to students, not systems.

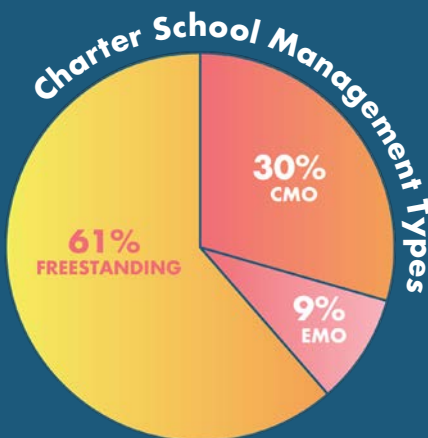
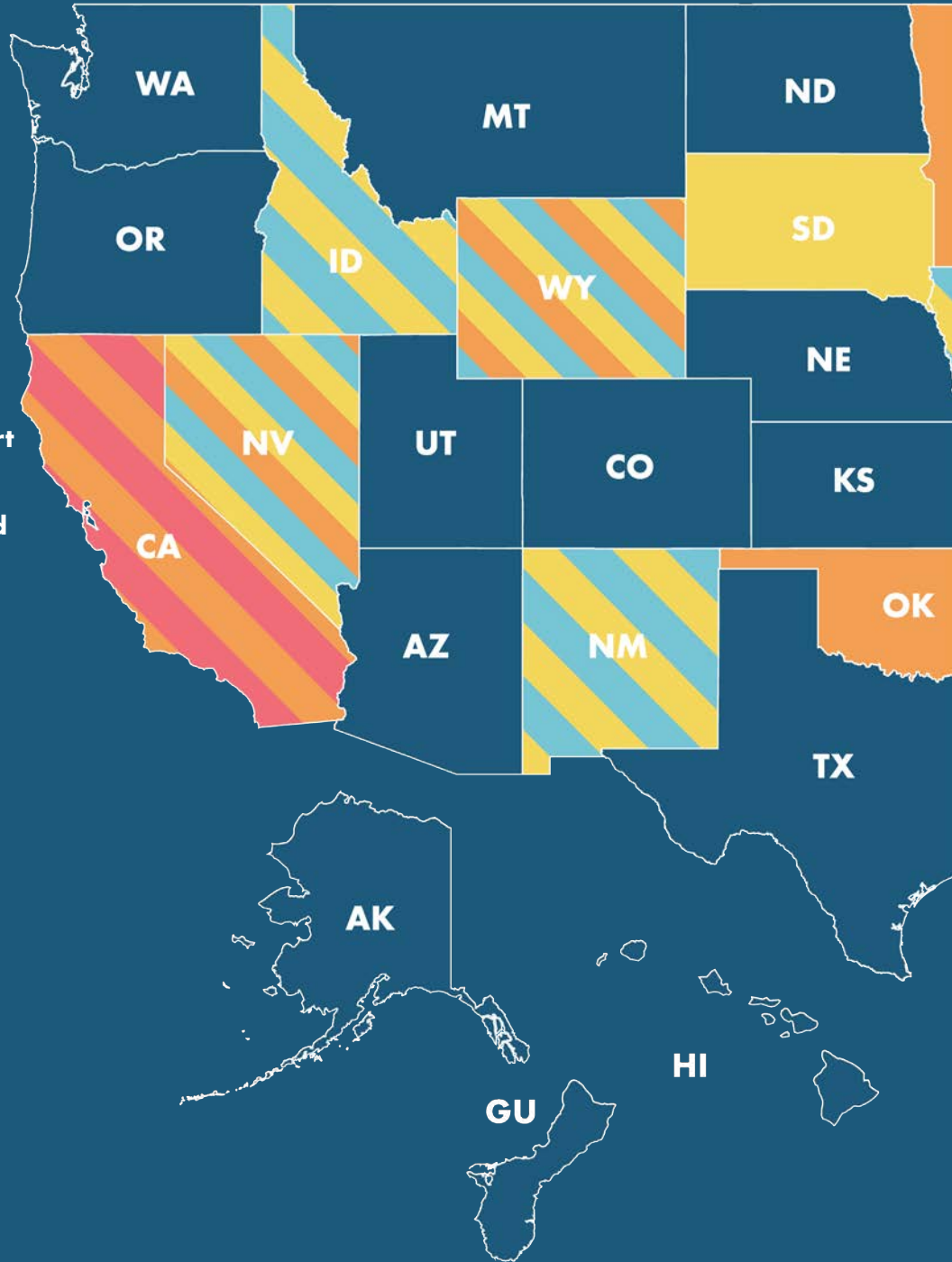
However, the next year or two may see a shift in this dynamic. The federal government's pandemic response includes unprecedented funding for K-12 education, which should help ratchet down the hostility to charter schools among the education establishment, at least temporarily.

We need to use this time wisely. For 30 years, charter schools have been redefining what public education can be. But this is the first time many people are taking notice. We have a moment of opportunity to elevate our work and expand our reach, so every family can access a great public school. As challenging as the past two years have been, I'm proud of our response and excited about how the charter school movement will lead public education into the future.

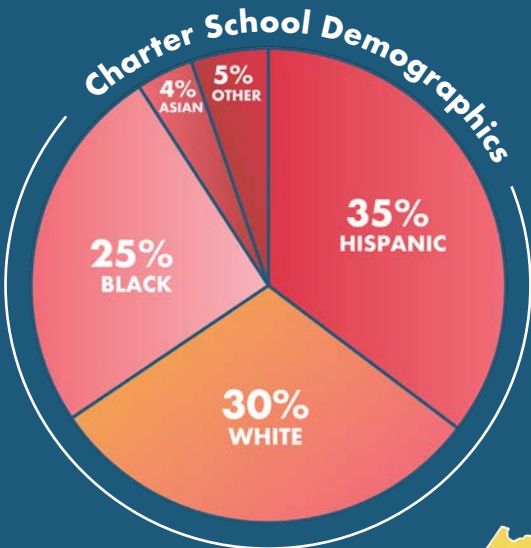
**Nina Rees, President & CEO**

# IMPACT MAP

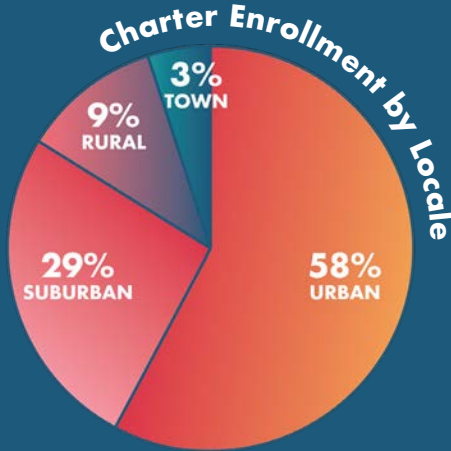
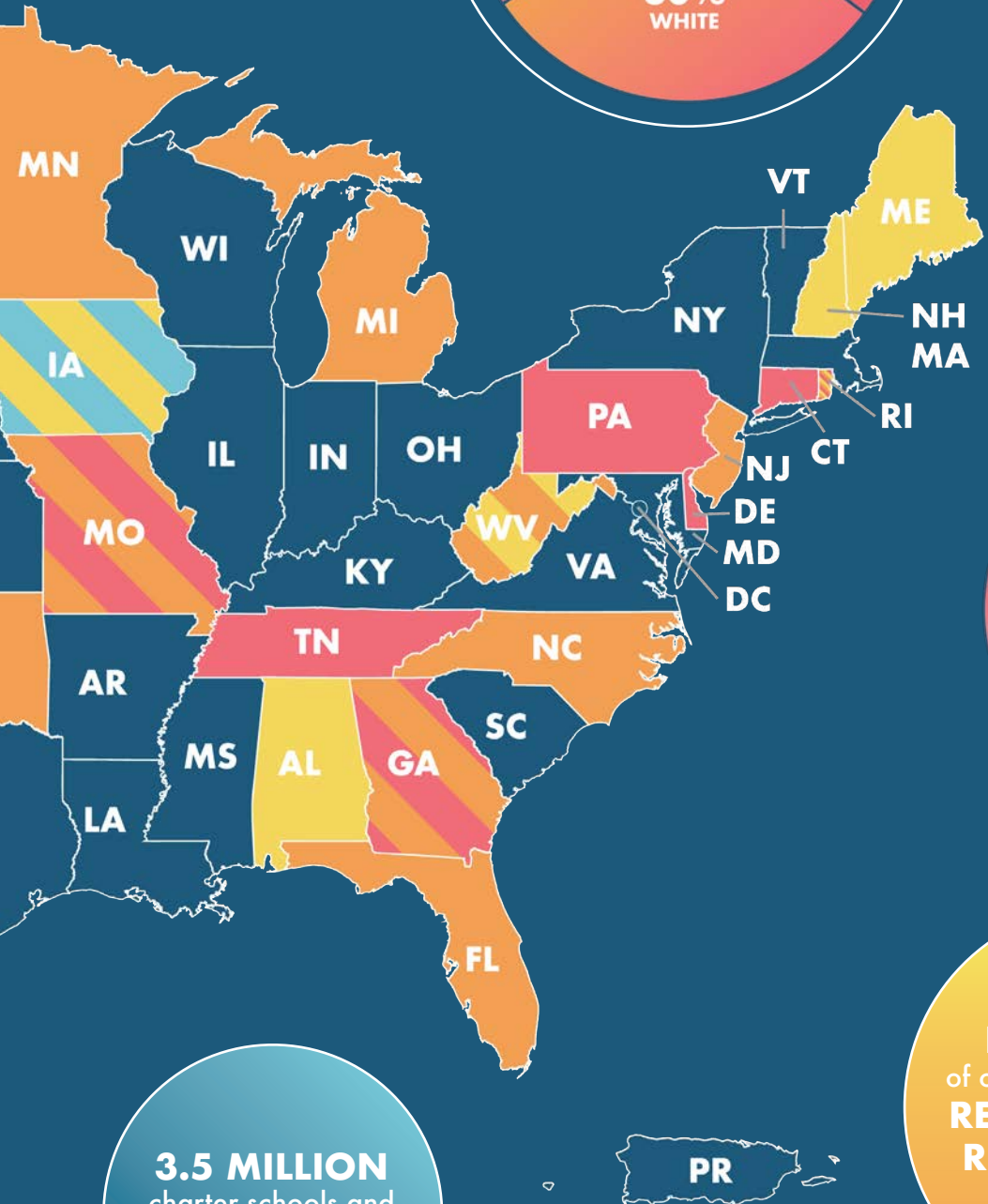
In 2021, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools made an impact in numerous states across the nation. Through coalition building, communications, policy, and legal support, we engaged our allies to move the needle at a time of great need.



**206,000**  
charter school teachers



**45 STATES, DC, GUAM, AND PUERTO RICO** have charter school laws



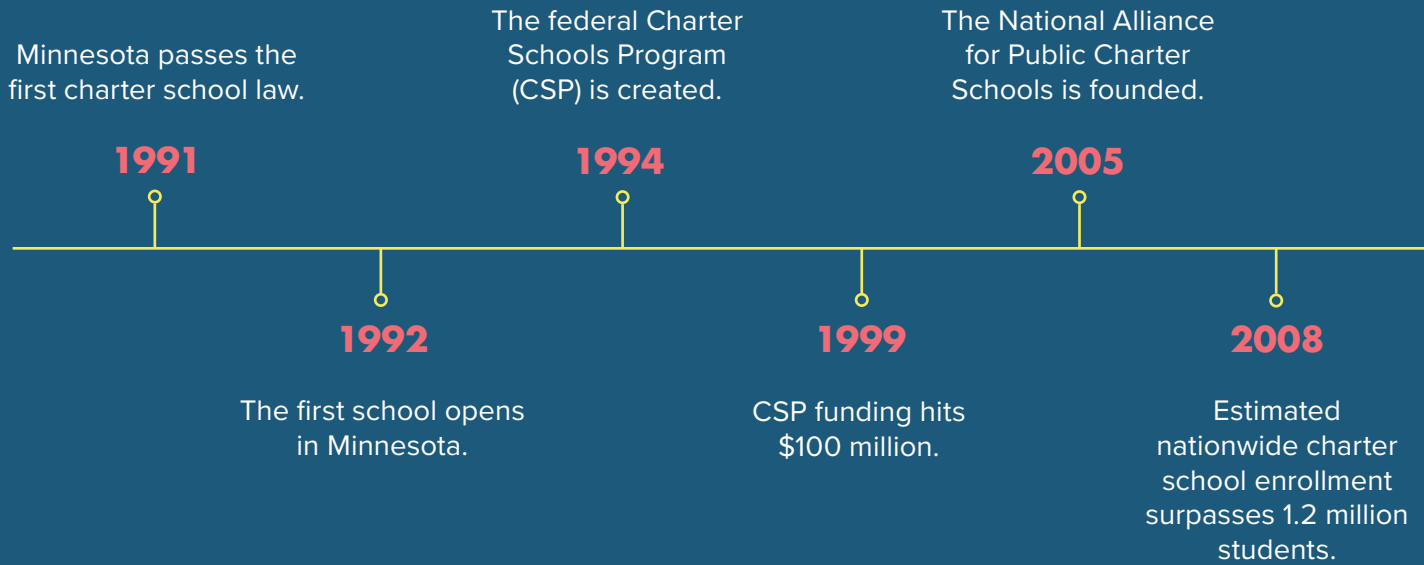
**3.5 MILLION** charter schools and **7,500 CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**NEARLY 59%** of charter school students **RECEIVE FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCHES**



# 30 YEARS OF IMPACT

In 1991, Amazon and Google didn't exist. Neither did smart phones. But a small band of teachers and school leaders in Minnesota were about to change America's education landscape forever. The state passed the first charter school law in the country, creating a new type of public school independent of the school district, focused on the individual needs and interests of students and propelling them to academic success. Fast forward 30 years to today, and 45 states have public charter school laws making it possible for approximately 200,000 dedicated teachers to deliver education at over 7,500 charter schools serving nearly 3.5 million students. Now that's something to celebrate.







CSP funding surpasses \$250 million.

Total number of charter schools surpasses 6,000 campuses.

Funding for the CSP reaches \$440 million.

The charter school movement celebrates 30 years of success.

**2010**

**2013**

**2018**

**2021**

**2011**

**2017**

**2019**

The number of charter school students surpasses 2 million.

Estimated nationwide enrollment surpasses 3 million students.

West Virginia becomes the 45th state to pass a charter school law.



# FEDERAL POLICY IN ACTION

2021 ushered in a new Congress and Administration. The bulk of our year was focused on getting to know the Biden Administration while monitoring and intervening when necessary on the myriad bills being promoted at the federal level to ensure that charter schools were treated equitably or that laws were not inadvertently impacting our autonomy. We focused on the two reconciliation bills and the infrastructure bill that took center stage to ensure that charter schools could tap into resources and protect them from moves that stand to impact their autonomy. We are pleased to report that the last round of relief funding—the American Rescue Plan—contains \$121B in additional funding to support K-12 schools, and our schools, as public schools, are benefiting from these resources. The infrastructure bill also contains needed support to close the digital divide, an issue that we wrote about in 2020. While the future of the second reconciliation bill, Build Back Better, is unclear, we are carefully monitoring the Pre-K and other education provisions in the bill to ensure our sector is ready to tap into these funding streams if and when it becomes available.

One of the National Alliance’s key goals is to grow the number of high-quality public charter schools through the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP). The program has broad bipartisan support in Congress and currently receives \$440 million in annual funding. During the most recent federal appropriations cycle, the CSP faced its biggest threat in years. The U.S. House Appropriations Committee advanced a bill that would cut CSP funding by \$40 million and potentially strip charter schools of their ability to hire the best and most cost-effective vendors.

The CSP is the primary source of federal funding for the creation and replication of quality charter schools across the nation. We were shocked that House appropriators attempted to reduce funding for the CSP at a time when families are seeking more choices for their children’s education and overall federal K-12 education funding increased at historic levels. Even more concerning was the appropriations bill’s vague and dangerous language that would deny all federal funding—including funding for students from low-income communities and students with disabilities—to any charter school that contracts with a for-profit entity to oversee or manage activities at the school. As the House language was written, it could strip federal funding from any charter school that contracts with a private company to perform critical functions such as providing transportation, food services, or back-office administration. School districts that do business with the very same companies would not be affected.

To combat this direct and divisive attack on charter schools, the National Alliance sprang into action.

**We implemented a robust campaign to educate policymakers, generate high-profile earned media coverage, and use our social media platforms and influence to mobilize activists across the nation.**

We rallied charter school leaders, families, and advocates to ensure Congress hears from our community. Our advocacy campaigns netted more than 50,000 emails to members of Congress. We generated coverage on CNN.com and in *The Hill* that described how harmful the appropriations bill language



## 2021 APPROPRIATIONS CAMPAIGN

In just a few short weeks, our rapid response campaign:

- ▶ Generated dozens of media placements in outlets including CNN, *The Hill*, and *The Wall Street Journal*
- ▶ Yielded more than 50,000 emails to Congress
- ▶ Pushed back proposed cuts by working closely with Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), chairwoman of the Senate HELP Committee
- ▶ Increased Congressional Black Caucus Support through a “Dear Colleague” letter
- ▶ Compelled 21 members of Congress to sign onto an amendment to ensure charter schools were treated fairly and four to sign onto an amendment to increase CSP funding

is to charter schools. Nina Rees was a featured guest on CSPAN’s “National Journal.” We also worked with the editorial page editor at *The Wall Street Journal* to produce a powerful editorial that ran in July.

Although we did not expect much movement in the House, we were hopeful that we could see positive results in the Senate. In October, the Senate Democrats released their appropriations bill draft. We were pleased that the harmful language that threatened to cut off all federal funding if charter schools contracted with

for-profit entities for services was not included in the Senate bill. The draft bill also kept the Charter Schools Program at level funding. With a continuing resolution in place to close out the year, we will be working diligently to ensure that the Senate version prevails in House-Senate negotiations.

Overall, this is good news and demonstrates the effectiveness of our communications and federal policy tactics and infrastructure.

# CONVENING LEADERS

Six years ago, the National Alliance launched School Leaders of Color—or “SLOC”—a cohort of charter leaders of color to share best practices, network, and receive training in communications and advocacy. The cohort creates a space for learning and sharing among peers and brings these leaders from across the nation to Washington, D.C., for in-depth training and collaboration.

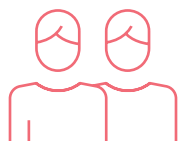
SLOC participants consistently rate these sessions as valuable and report that the cohort supports their leadership development. Since the launch, this cohort has grown to include more than 230 charter school leaders—including principals, executive directors, CEOs, superintendents, and other school-based leaders who operate high-quality schools. Across the year, SLOC shares best practices, showcases the secrets to their success, and advocates for charter schools with their congressional delegations and relevant decision makers.

In February, 50 leaders from our SLOC cohort participated in a “virtual fly-in” with federal policymakers and their staff. Typically, these meetings are in person,

but we adapted due to the pandemic and staffed 70 virtual meetings for SLOC members. Notable meetings with policymakers or their staff included Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY), Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-03), and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY-08). Across these meetings, we consistently saw the leaders share stories and messaging that resonated with legislators and their staff.

To support the ongoing success of this cohort, we created an advocacy guidebook that provides a deeper dive into how school leaders can be more effective advocates at the local, state, and federal levels. It features three core sections, including how to execute general advocacy, how to be a strong political advocate, and the science and theory behind advocacy. We plan to share the guidebook with our entire extended network of school leaders and allied organizations and implement it as a core tool of our advocacy training efforts moving forward.

We are excited to continue engaging this cohort to further support their efforts and elevate them as champions of our movement.



**50**  
Total  
Participants



**18**  
States  
Represented



**70**  
Meetings



**28**  
Unique  
House Districts



**36**  
Unique  
Senate Seats



# CONVENING THE MOVEMENT AND LEARNING TOGETHER

In our role as convener of the charter school movement, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools hosted 18 thoughtful webinars on engaging and relevant issues throughout this year. Advocates turned to the National Alliance to hear important updates on policy and, more importantly, to feel part of a thriving community of charter school leaders and supporters who are learning and growing together. Whether these webinars involved hundreds of participants or a smaller, more intimate group, they tackled timely topics that are important to the charter school sector and the education reform space. Examples of the topics we covered in the webinars include public school enrollment trends, teacher advocacy, school financial strategies, the American Rescue Plan Act, and student engagement. More than 2,200 people signed up to join our webinars.



- ▶ February 3, 2021: [The Charter Community's 2021 Federal Education Priorities](#)
- ▶ February 11, 2021: [Tools for Growing Student Enrollment: Measuring Your Digital Marketing ROI](#)
- ▶ February 23, 2021: [Charter School Leaders of Color and the Divine 9: Charting a Course Toward K-12 Public School Educational Excellence Together](#)
- ▶ March 2, 2021: [Addressing Trauma through a Structured School or System-Wide Strategy](#)
- ▶ March 4, 2021: [Toward Understanding Unionization's Impacts on Charter School Students](#)
- ▶ March 10, 2021: [Digitally Transforming Purchasing](#)
- ▶ March 17, 2021: [What Will the American Rescue Plan Act Mean for Your School?](#)
- ▶ April 14, 2021: [Strong Connections: Ideas and Tips to Improve Student Engagement and Learning for the Remainder of the School Year](#)
- ▶ April 20, 2021: [Financial Strategy: Keep an Emergency from Becoming a Crisis](#)
- ▶ May 5, 2021: [Masterclass: Teacher Voices In Advocacy](#)
- ▶ May 5, 2021: [30 Years Strong: Celebrating National Charter Schools Week](#)
- ▶ May 12, 2021: [30 Under 30 Awards Ceremony](#)
- ▶ May 26, 2021: [How Do Schools Find Facility Money? Stories from School Leaders of Color](#)
- ▶ June 10, 2021: [Applying Lessons from Katrina to Pandemic Response for Charter Schools](#)
- ▶ September 22, 2021: [Voting with Their Feet: A State-Level Analysis of Public School Enrollment Trends](#)
- ▶ September 28, 2021: [Critical Race Theory: Continuing the Discussion](#)
- ▶ October 6, 2021: [Elevating Teacher Voices](#)
- ▶ December 3, 2021: [Advocacy Guidebook Training](#)

# BUILDING AWARENESS: INSPIRING & EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

When people know what charter schools are, who they serve, and how they work, they tend to like them. So that's why we're making sure everyone knows the truth. We are on a mission to change decades of misunderstanding and disinformation. We took to the airwaves with state and local partners to shore up support and shift the public narrative on public charter schools.



## If You Believe: Finding Common Ground with White Progressives

The National Alliance focused our resources to build a values-based, multimedia advertising campaign to sway a group of people who are generally aligned with our values, but surprisingly likely to be our most vocal opponents: White progressives. The basic premise of our campaign? If you believe every child deserves a great education, then you should support all public schools and the students who attend them, including charter schools.

The key to the campaign was using message-tested language to dispel misconceptions that keep many White progressives from supporting charter schools and prove that:

1. **Charter schools are public schools**—tuition-free and open to all.
2. **Charter schools overwhelmingly serve students of color and those from low-**

**income backgrounds**—not White affluent students who can attend any school of their choosing.

Our campaign's initial target markets were Los Angeles and Nashville where we influenced women, millennials, and non-college educated White progressives—our most persuadable groups. The multimedia campaign included outdoor billboards, print and web magazine placements, and social ads as well as celebrity endorsements from former SNL writer Alan Zweibel, actress Bridgid Coulter, and “Big Bang Theory” star Mayim Bialik. We repurposed the DiscoverCharters.org website to align with this new messaging.

The “If You Believe” campaign is scalable in other markets with high numbers of White progressives, including but not limited to Seattle, Boston, Washington, D.C., Denver, Austin, and Albuquerque.

## One Size Doesn't Fit All

We know from polling that the more people know what a charter school is, the more they like it. In 2021, we partnered with the City Fund to run a multi-state ad campaign aimed at boosting the general public's knowledge about charter schools in several states—and plan to continue the work through 2024.

In Rhode Island and Georgia, the National Alliance ran a radio ad campaign featuring teachers who have worked in both district and charter public schools. In the ads, they call on all public schools to work together for the good of students.



## Changing the Narrative

Through a robust mix of traditional reporting in state and national media and strategically placed key opinion pieces, we secured coverage on a wide range of issues important to charter schools. Top placements with national reach included the following print and broadcast headlines:

### Washington Post

By Ashley Parker, Laura Meckler, Fenit Nirappil, Annie Linskey | March 7

'An essential service': Inside Biden's struggle to meet his school reopening promises

### Wall Street Journal

By Esther Fung | May 4

That Vacated Sears Store May Reopen as a Public School

### Wall Street Journal

By George Parker | May 26

How My Mind Opened to Charter Schools

### Washington Post

By Nina Rees | May 31

Virtual learning is the right choice for some D.C. charters

### CNN

By Katie Lobosco | July 21

House Democrats call for cutting federal funding for charter schools

### Wall Street Journal Editorial

By Editorial Board | July 23

Congress Beats Up Charter Schools

### C-SPAN's "Washington Journal"

Hosted By: Bill Scanlan | July 23

Nina Rees on Efforts to Reduce Funding for Charter Schools

### Fox News "Sunday Night in America with Trey Gowdy"

Featuring Nina Rees and 30 under 30 Changemaker, Kalan Rogers | September 13

The power of education can change your life

### Axios

By Erica Pandey | September 22

Charter schools boomed during the pandemic

### CNBC "The News with Shepard Smith"

Reported By Ylan Mui | October 15

Students leaving public schools for other options

### USA TODAY

By Nina Rees | November 2

Listen to parents: Families say they want more school choice. We should give it to them

### NPR

Reported By: Anya Kamenetz | December 15

Where are the students? For a second straight year, school enrollment is dropping



# VOTING WITH THEIR FEET:

## A State-Level Analysis of Public Charter School and District Public School Enrollment Trends

In September 2021, the National Alliance released a groundbreaking report on charter school enrollment during the COVID pandemic. Based on an analysis of available data from 42 states, the “Voting with Their Feet” report shows families across the country fled district schools in droves during the 2020-2021 school year and a record number chose to enroll their students in charter schools.

All told, during the first full school year of the pandemic, at least 240,000 new students across the nation enrolled in these unique public schools while enrollment in district schools dropped by 1.4 million students. When final numbers are available from every state, we are likely to see the single biggest increase in charter school student enrollment in the history of our sector.

Charter schools were the only public schools that saw enrollment growth during the 2020-21 school year and now serve approximately 3.5 million students. Data obtained by the National Alliance shows charter school enrollment grew by more than 7% in the 2020-21 school year, while district public school enrollment decreased in every state.

Were the enrollment shifts a fluke? Several national polls suggest parents have no plans to go back to the

way things were. The National Parents Union surveyed parents during the 2020-21 school year and found that **80% of them had an eye-opening experience that led to increased parental involvement and the desire to have more engagement with the schools to provide input regarding their child’s education.**

This became especially important during the pandemic, when many parents sought more public school options for their students.



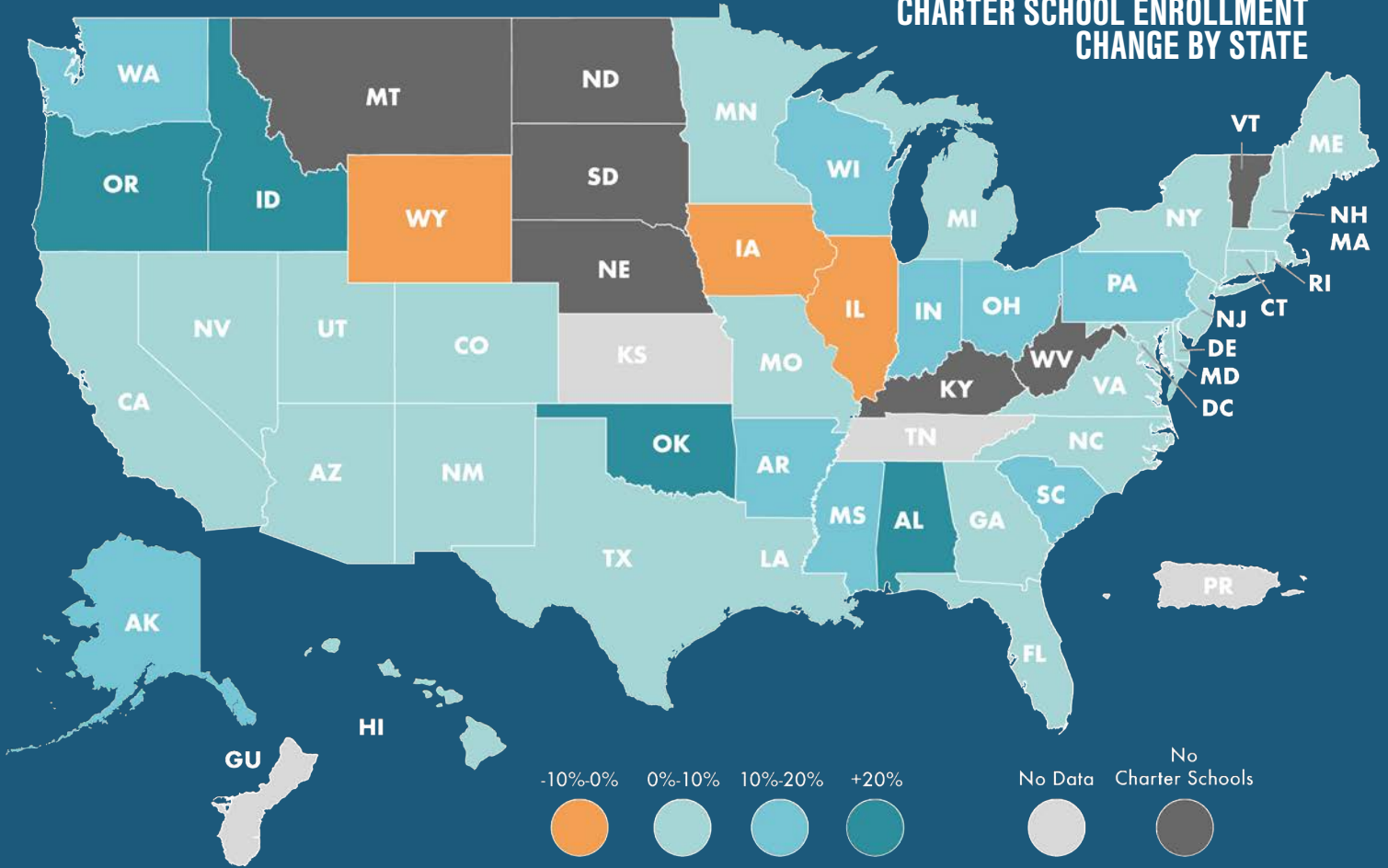
**The passion that the teachers at Tallahassee Classical have for not just the curriculum, but for the whole school, is inspiring. They are committed to not just teaching, but to a rich curriculum to build up the students’ minds to seek truth and be good people.**

**Matt Mohler**

*Parent, Tallahassee Classical Charter School*



## CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT CHANGE BY STATE



This includes parents like Tallahassee father, Matt Mohler, who knew it was time for a change after watching his children struggle through online learning at a district school in his community. He enrolled four of his five children, all under age 10, in Tallahassee Classical Charter School, where he was blown away by his children’s progress at their new school.

In Washington State, a parent with one child at Rainier Valley Leadership Academy (RVLA) and two others in a local district school decided to enroll all three at RVLA because of the exceptional communication, academic supports, and emphasis on mental health for scholars and families. According to the school’s principal and CEO, Baionne Coleman, enrollment increased 23% over the last year. The English language learner coordinator at RVLA, Erica Carmichael, said many parents appreciated the school’s swift and thoughtful response to the pandemic—especially by implementing a hybrid model of learning.



**Multilingual families are attracted to charter schools in general because the school and class sizes are relatively smaller than district school systems. Our multilingual families appreciate the support and care we have for one another. This can be seen by our constant communication to families and an inviting environment in a caring community. Incorporating culture months, pep rallies, and diverse speakers throughout the school year aligns with our curriculum and grading policies.**

**Baionne Coleman**  
*CEO, Rainier Valley Leadership Academy*

# STATES TAKE THE LEAD

**2021 was a historic year for state policy wins at the National Alliance. As our opposition ratcheted up the pressure, we successfully collaborated with our allies to protect and expand favorable policy outcomes across the nation.**

More than 50 percent of states or territories with charter laws passed legislation favorable to charter schools this year. Of those, 15 made progress with funding or facilities, six made progress with authorization and accountability, and three made progress in both areas. In addition, four states defended their sectors against dangerous proposed legislation that would have harmed charter schools.

Below are a few examples of our most notable victories.

## BETTER AUTHORIZING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Iowa** – New legislation created a statewide authorizer, provided charter schools with flexibility to innovate, and set a high bar for opening charter schools to ensure quality and hold the schools accountable for performance-based results. We coordinated closely with the governor’s office and offered advice on the proposed legislation, the starting point of which drew from language that we crafted a few years ago. Our allies also defeated a bill that would have placed a restrictive cap on charter school growth. Moving forward, we are drafting bills, raising local dollars, and contracting with our lobbyist. We are also engaging with networks interested in moving into the state.

## DEFENSE

**New Mexico** – We advised our allies to stop anti-charter school momentum in a union-dominated state and move an offensive agenda to strengthen the policy environment for charter school growth. The coalition not only moved priorities through the Senate education committee, but for the first time in several years, it was able to get a stand-alone charter school bill enacted into law. This bill requires each charter school to provide an enrollment preference to children of that school’s employees. With this new momentum and a more supportive public education commission, our state coalition continues toward its goal of 50% enrollment growth in five years.





In Iowa, we have been fighting diligently to improve the charter school sector for many years. The National Alliance's expertise was invaluable towards helping us achieve our goals. I am excited to continue collaborating with the National Alliance to further grow our space.

**Mark Jacobs**

*Founder, Reaching Higher Iowa*

## STRONGER CHARTER LAW

**Wyoming** – Wyoming first passed its charter school law in 1995. It is ranked near the bottom on the National Alliance's State Rankings Report (#41 out of 44). We worked with former Speaker Russ Donley to recommend changes to dramatically improve the law. These suggested changes were turned into a draft bill that passed the Senate in the first week of the session. The coalition, which expanded to include statewide organizations and the state superintendent of education, worked to maintain the Senate language when House opposition arose. The bill passed on the final night of the session. We are working with allies to ensure that implementation is executed correctly.

## FUNDING EQUITY

**Nevada** – We helped secure equitable funding for charter school students in the state's rewriting of its public school funding system and secured \$15 million in COVID-19-relief funding for charter schools that serve Title I students. We collaborated with a broad coalition to engage public opinion and key policymakers. Our working group included the Las Vegas business community, the mining industry, the Charter School Association of Nevada, ExcelinEd, and the Nevada School Choice Coalition.



# 30 UNDER 30 CHANGEMAKERS

## AWARD HONOREES

As part of National Charter Schools Week 2021: 30 Years Strong, the National Alliance honored 30 exceptional young leaders who are connected to charter schools and using their ideas, talents, and platforms to advance educational and economic opportunity and promote equality and social justice. **The 30 Under 30 Changemaker Awards spotlighted individuals from across the country who are making a meaningful impact in their community via the arts, writing, and sports; education and politics; leadership; science; and social justice.**

“The students, teachers, and advocates who make up our 30 Under 30 Changemakers reflect 30 years of the tremendous success of these innovative, student-centered public schools. I am grateful for our Changemakers and the thousands of teachers, leaders, and families across the nation who work tirelessly to support their communities and improve public education opportunities for all students,” said Nina Rees, National Alliance president and CEO. “We are honored to recognize and lift up these 30 Changemakers like charter school senior Darnella Frazier who bravely witnessed and captured live video of the unjust death of George Floyd while he was in police custody last summer and school founder Darren Ramalho who is opening the first-ever K-8 charter school in rural Perry County, Alabama, focusing on project-based learning and community leadership.”

### **KYLE DENMAN, 26** *Los Angeles, California*

Kyle is a “political scientist with a passion for fashion” whose mission is to use his own platform and privilege to create social change, share cultural narratives, and humanize the experiences of underserved communities. This political science major turned fashion designer and 2018 Young Fashion Designer of the Year has made his mark as a teacher at New Village Girls Academy.







**KALAN ROGERS, 27**  
*Calhoun Falls, South Carolina*

Kalan graduated from Calhoun Falls Charter High School and returned as principal of his alma mater, where he focuses on creating a positive and safe school environment.

**Samantha Aponte, 28**  
*Tulsa, Oklahoma*

**Katrina Brown-Aliffi, 29**  
*New York, New York*

**Mari Copeny, 13**  
*Flint, Michigan*

**Roquel Crutcher, 26**  
*Memphis, Tennessee*

**Darnella Frazier, 18**  
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

**Noelani Gabriel, 26**  
*Boston, Massachusetts*

**Audrey Hagopian, 29**  
*Phoenix, Arizona*

**Alessandro Iaia Hernandez, 18**  
*Wilmington, Delaware*

**Ayden Jent, 28**  
*Indianapolis, Indiana*

**Adriana Mancini, 22**  
*Palm City, Florida*

**Davian Morgan, 29**  
*Washington, District of Columbia*

**Brianna Noble, 26**  
*Oakland, California*

**Phillip Nguyen, 29**  
*Toms River, New Jersey*

**Kwastlmut Sadie Olsen, 19**  
*Bellingham, Washington*

**Darren Ramalho, 29**  
*Marion, Alabama*

**Jalen Ramsey, 26**  
*Los Angeles, California, and  
Nashville, Tennessee*

**Gitanjali Rao, 15**  
*Lone Tree, Colorado*

**Nathan Ream, 16**  
*Jacksonville, Florida*

**Lauryn Renford, 19**  
*Washington, District of Columbia*

**Artemisio Romero y Carver, 18**  
*Santa Fe, New Mexico*

**Gavin Schiffres, 27**  
*St. Louis, Missouri*

**Nia Sioux, 19**  
*Los Angeles, California, and  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

**Jess Stone, 24**  
*Flat Rock, Michigan*

**Amira Thomas, 29**  
*Cleveland, Ohio*



**ANNA GRACE TIEDE  
HOTTINGER, 18**  
*Shoreview, Minnesota*

When Anna Grace saw tobacco products like e-cigarettes growing in popularity among her peers, she helped organize students to speak at their local council meeting advocating to raise the age to legally buy tobacco from 18 to 21. Anna Grace joined the National Alliance as an intern in October 2021 to help build our Rising Leaders Initiative. She is an alumna of EdVisions Off Campus.

**London Carter Williams, 12**  
*Waterbury, Connecticut*

**Natalie Wojcik, 21**  
*Douglassville, Pennsylvania*





**NAJAH AQEEL, 14**  
*Nashville, Tennessee*

Najah, a student at Valor Collegiate Prep High School, made history this year when she led a nationwide rule change to ensure high school volleyball athletes can wear religious headwear without seeking permission.

# DEFINING THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

As the charter school sector continues to thrive, our opponents have engaged the legal system to push their agenda, particularly when the legislature or public opinion has failed. Since 2016, the National Charter School Legal Action Fund and the Alliance of Public Charter School Attorneys (APCSA) have been instrumental in fighting back. In just five years, the Legal Action Fund has contributed to more than 20 legal victories for the charter school community across the country while APCSA has convened semi-annually to discuss best practices, identify emerging legal trends and threats, strategize, coordinate responses, and share key resources with more than 400 charter school attorneys nationwide.

In Oklahoma, the National Alliance helped secure a groundbreaking decision that will have positive ripple effects. Starting in 2019, our Legal Action

Fund contributed money for a funding equity lawsuit the Oklahoma Public Charter School Association offensively filed against the Oklahoma State Board of Education. In addition to financial support, we also provided technical and strategic support, equipping our allies and supporters on the ground with best practices and the benefit of our Fund's experience and expertise.

After years of litigation, the State Board announced a proposed settlement agreement in March 2021 to equalize funding for charter school students, effectively ending the lawsuit and giving the charter school community in Oklahoma a huge victory. This is a great example of how litigation and the legislative process worked together to produce a great outcome. Specifically, the State Board voted to allow charter schools to tap into several state and local revenue streams previously off limits to them. The state superintendent, however, believed the vote inappropriately sidestepped the legislature and violated the state constitution.

The legislature responded by introducing and ultimately passing SB 229, The Rosebud Act, which provides \$30 million in medical marijuana tax revenue to support district public schools and brick-and-mortar charter schools that receive below average local tax revenue. While The Rosebud Act does not provide local dollars to charter school students, it does open a significant new funding stream to those charters that need the most help. It also is the first time we have seen funding equity litigation produce statewide legislation to close the funding gap—and all within a few weeks after the State Board proposed settling the litigation.

This is a clear, decisive, history-making win not just for the Oklahoma charter community but for our entire sector. As the charter school community continues to grow and thrive, we see the courts as a key partner in helping us protect and expand our impact on behalf of families across the nation.



**The National Alliance's Legal Action Fund was instrumental in our legislative victory this past year. Without our lawsuit, we may not have had the opportunity to pass this legislation; this is a great example of litigation and legislation working hand-in-hand. Through years of financial and strategic support, the Legal Action Fund helped us enact a landmark law that will positively impact the trajectory of our movement, and more importantly the lives of Oklahoma children, for generations to come.**

**Brent Bushey**

*Executive Director of the Oklahoma Public School Resource Center*





# THE CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITY CENTER

**\$**  
**The Charter School Facility Center estimates that state policy wins in the past three years have had a roughly \$1B BENEFIT for charter school facilities.**

Across the nation, charter schools struggle to find quality facilities, receive equitable policy treatment, secure equitable funding and financing, and receive permission to occupy vacant buildings. The increased demand for charter schools during the pandemic has made this concern even more pressing and unless something changes, it will continue to be a key issue for generations to come. Charter schools have had to learn to be more creative to secure facilities: some are partnering with mixed-use community buildings and residential housing; others are occupying vacant retail spaces, malls, office buildings, and old churches. In May, we published an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* that shone a bright light on charter schools' success with mixed-use development throughout the pandemic and beyond. Moving forward, we expect charter schools to make more use of mixed-use development to create space for their needs.

Charter schools continue to fight for ample and equitable funding for facility purposes. Some states provide a minimal level of per-pupil funding and a few other states provide small one-time grants. At the local level, a handful of school districts have discovered the benefits of including charter schools in their local bonds. Through a collaborative partnership with school districts, charter schools can reduce their cost of

financing and spend more money on education instead of interest payments. Over the past year, the National Alliance's Charter School Facility Center has produced reports to promote research-backed best practices and received media attention on innovative solutions.

For the past three years, the Facility Center has been on the forefront of providing research, technical assistance, policy advocacy, and communications support on facilities topics across the nation. As the Covid-19 pandemic continued to change how children are educated, we doubled down to ensure that charter schools, our allies, and policymakers have the most up-to-date information so that charter schools can achieve their facility goals. Since the Facility Center's inception, we have produced nearly 30 reports, 10 major media placements, and over 40 live and virtual events. As we look towards the future of charter schools, facilities will continue to be a central component of the success of our movement.

# INVOLVING CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NEW POLICY AREAS

Charter schools are an essential component of public education. While the creation, replication, and support of charter schools remains our primary area of policy focus, the National Alliance has also identified several emerging areas of policy that impact the students and communities we serve.

Across the nation, children and families are still dealing with numerous challenges related to remote learning and the emotional strife caused by the pandemic. As American education continued to adapt to new realities, it became even more critical that we support the “whole-child development” of charter school students across the nation.

To address this need, a core goal of our new strategic plan is to collaborate with new partners and engage with new coalitions. In the past year, we have supported advocacy issues led by our partners. This work includes using our voice to join with partners via coalition letters, awareness campaigns, and direct outreach to policy makers. One notable example is pushing for policy change with the Department of Agriculture on school nutrition flexibilities.

Moving forward, we will continue to expand our imprint on these issue areas to support students across the nation!



**Teaching and learning don't happen in a vacuum. There are so many factors that go into ensuring that a child can reach their full potential.**

**Dr. Priscilla Chan**

*Co-founder, Co-CEO of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative*

## FINDING COMMON GROUND: Policy Areas for the National Alliance

- ▶ Accountability and Assessments
- ▶ Food Insecurity and School Meals
- ▶ Pell Grant Funding
- ▶ Afterschool Program Funding
- ▶ Special Education Funding
- ▶ Increasing Teacher Diversity
- ▶ COVID Relief Funding
- ▶ School Construction Funding
- ▶ Broadband Funding



# CREATING SPACE FOR SOLUTIONS

At the National Alliance, we continue to look for innovative ways to support the practitioners and professionals in our sector who work tirelessly to provide a quality education to students. Educators, administrators, and operations staff are the lifeblood of charter schools. Sometimes, this work can be isolating, especially in smaller single-site schools. That's why it is important to create opportunities for these professionals to build community, share information, learn from each other, and hear from experts in the field.

With that in mind, we launched three new communities of practice (COP) to bring interested stakeholders together around topics we believe our movement can excel at. First convened at the 2021 virtual conference, these working groups will provide best practices, discuss pressing issues, and help develop local and national strategies. Moving forward, we are excited for these communities of practice to serve as leaders and trend setters for charter schools nationwide and to forge relationships with like-minded professionals who may sit outside the charter school sector.

## INTRODUCING THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

### **National Collective of Charter School Operations Professionals**

Although staff titles differ from school to school, this cohort includes individuals responsible for purchasing, facilities, finance, IT, human resources, and other duties.

### **Early Childhood Education (ECE) Community of Practice**

The goal of the ECE COP is to increase the quality of early education resources in charter schools by building a vast network and leveraging the experience of early education staff and experts. Membership is open to any practitioner currently providing or interested in learning more about ECE.

### **Trauma-Informed Education Community of Practice**

This COP was launched to support school leaders and educators as they take on trauma-informed learning. The need for this group is abundantly clear as we tackle the trauma and unrest caused by the pandemic.

# WHERE THE MOVEMENT MEETS



Robin Lake



Secretary Miguel Cardona



Dr. Priscilla Chan



Vanessa Rodriguez

For the second year in a row, the National Charter Schools Conference was held virtually. As always, this year's conference brought school leaders, educators, advocates, policy experts, and funders together to share and learn from each other. And although we were not physically together in the same place, excitement was still palpable.

More than 2,300 people registered for the conference—representing rural towns, big cities, and suburban communities. Rather than doing a call for proposals, National Alliance staff and the program committee curated all of the content.

Sessions fell into three categories: educate, engage, and innovate. Presenters shared the latest on their solutions-driven expertise, including going in-depth on topics such as the achievement gap during the pandemic, the future of standardized assessments, and the role of Black institutions in the charter school movement. The event featured keynote speakers, breakout sessions, brainwaves (attendee-led sessions on topics of their choosing), and opportunities to network.

**The National Alliance used the conference as a way to unite our diverse sector and explore different perspectives on timely, provocative issues such as moral courage and critical race theory in schools.** Attendees raved about the conversation between Sharif El-Mekki, founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, and Ian Rowe, founder of Vertex Academies and Resident Fellow at American Enterprise Institute, on whether and how critical race theory should have a place in charter schools.

Dr. Priscilla Chan, co-founder and co-CEO of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, joined us as a keynote speaker to discuss her perspective as a physician and school founder on educating and caring for the whole child. We were also pleased to welcome U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona who gave his first address to the charter school community during the conference. He was introduced by our youngest speaker, Connecticut charter school student London Carter Williams. Ninety percent of attendees believe they learned something that will help them implement positive changes at their school or organization.





Freddy Gonzalez



Tre Johnson



Sharif El-Mekki



Ian Rowe



Dan Weisberg



Iyshad Manji



Lagra Newman



I've attended this conference in person seven of the last 19 years that I've worked for a charter school. I was blown away by the quality of content that was available virtually this year. I would really like to attend again in person, but the virtual was much better than my expectations.

NCSC21 Attendee

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- Strada Education Network

- Charter Support Unit
- Erin Leonard Events
- New Plan Learning
- Riverside Insights
- Truist

# PUBLICATIONS



**January 25:**  
*School Buildings of the Future: Lessons from the Pandemic*  
Mark Medema, Charter School Facility Center

**January 25:**  
*The Charter School Community's Education Priorities for 2021*  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

**February 18:**  
*Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Public Charter School Laws, 2021*  
Todd Ziebarth, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

**April 2:**  
*How to Engage with the Charter Schools Program Administration in Your State*  
Gina Schileman, GPS Strategies Group

**April 5:**  
*Fiscal Impact as a Factor in Charter Growth in Rhode Island*  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

**April 19:**  
*State Policy Analysis: Charter School and District Bond Offerings*  
Jim Griffin and Brooke Quisenberry, Momentum Strategy & Research

**July 9:**  
*The Federal Charter Schools Program: 2021 Annual Report*  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

**September 22:**  
*Voting with Their Feet: A State-level Analysis of Public Charter School and District Public School Enrollment Trends*  
Debbie Veney and Drew Jacobs, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

**September 27:**  
*Elevating Our Voices: A Guidebook for School-level Teacher Advocacy*  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and TNTP

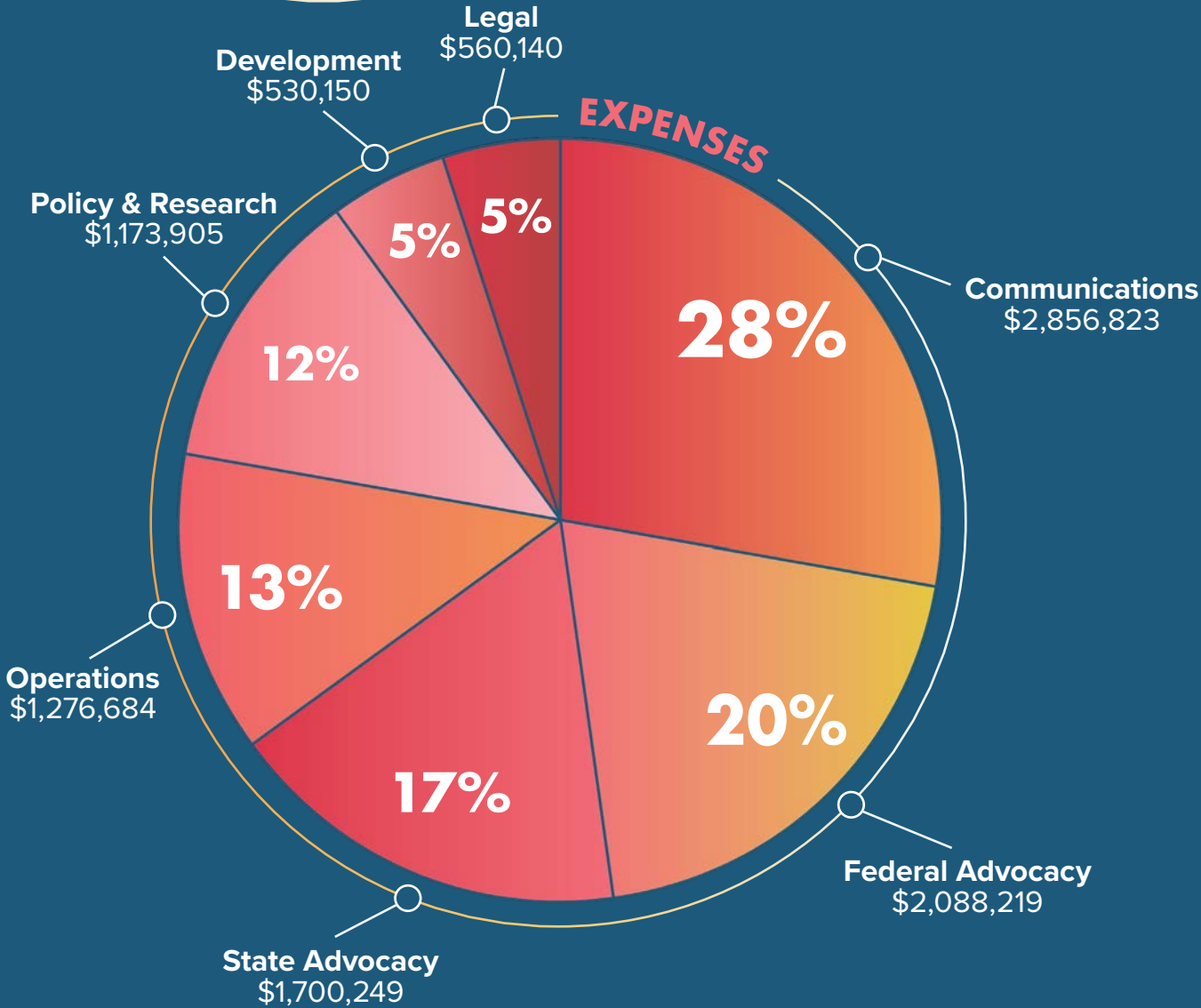
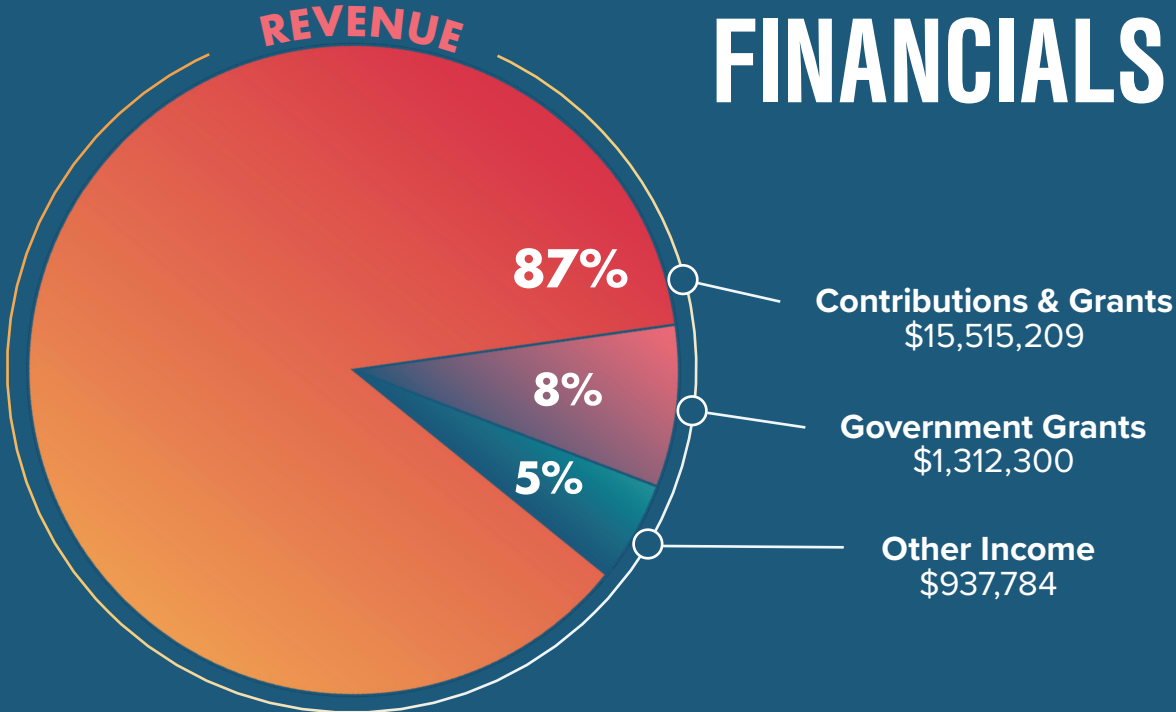


**September 27:**  
*Revolving Loan Funds: 10 Building Blocks for State and Local Charter School Facility Funds*  
Stefan Huh, Office of Public Charter School Financing and Support at DC OSSE

**October 8:**  
*Lessons Learned from California's Experience with School District Bonds*  
Nicolas Watson, California Charter Schools Association

**November 19:**  
*Big Wins for Charter Schools Nationwide: Why 2021 Was the Year of Public School Choice*  
Todd Ziebarth, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

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