



## **Don't Freeze Out Charter Schools**

Charter schools participate in every cutback.  
Don't single them out for a double cut.

### **Charter schools already do more with less.**

Charter schools are public schools, but their funding is based (though state formula) on their local district's expenditures. Even in the best of years, flaws in this formula mean that charter schools receive less money per student. Charter schools also receive *zero* funding for school facilities.

### **When district budgets are cut, charter schools share the pain.**

When there are hard times for local school districts, charter schools *automatically* participate because their funding levels rise and fall with public school expenditures. If local district spending goes down, charter school funding goes down.

Because the formula is based on audited district expenditure figures (which take time to compile), charter schools feel the impact of budget changes after a *lag*—but this is true when spending speeds *up* as well as when it slows down.

Think of school funding as a roller coaster, with charter schools in the last car. As the front (district) car turns each corner, the last (charter) car will continue in the previous direction for a moment. But the cars are linked together, so over time it's the same ride for everyone.

### **A funding freeze creates an unfair *double* cut.**

Last budget season, the link was broken. With budgets tightening, state foundation aid was frozen and charter funding was frozen. That may sound fair, but it isn't—for two reasons.

1. While state aid was frozen to districts, the total amount they could spend was not. Spending actually went *up* in many places, but charter schools didn't get a penny more.
2. When districts do cut back, those cuts will also hit charter schools (in the future, as they flow through the formula). Piling on with a freeze creates a double cut: charter schools suffer once now, and once again later.

But don't take our word for it. Back in March, then-UFT president Randi Weingarten acknowledged in an Open Letter that the freeze would create a "double cut" unless the funding formula changed. It hasn't.

### **Last year's freeze hurt charter schools. This year it will hurt all of our children.**

Last budget's targeted and unequal cut on charter funding hurt. Charter schools face rising costs—especially if they have union pension programs. And, unlike districts, they can't levy local taxes as a cushion. A *second* straight year of rising costs and frozen funding will mean painful cuts, and charter schools will have been singled out for no good reason.

But even if you are indifferent to charter schools, targeting them for cuts this year will hurt the entire state. New York could receive up to \$700 million in federal aid from the Obama administration's "Race to the Top," but that competition penalizes states that give unequal funding to charter schools. A repeat of last year's \$75 million cut to charters would knock New York out of the race, costing the state \$9 for every dollar it withholds from charter schools.

That's a bad deal for children across the state.