

March 18, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona, Ed.D.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Vision Statement

A teaching profession that is student oriented,
well respected, and personally fulfilling.

Dear Secretary Cardona,

The Association of American Educators would like to formally congratulate you on your historical confirmation as U.S. Secretary of Education. As a professional educators' association serving tens of thousands of educators in all fifty states, we are inspired by your public support of America's educators and their students, and your commitment to ensuring that all students, no matter their race, ability, or socio-economic background, receive an excellent education. In light of your confirmation, we are eager to work with you to address the safe reopening of schools, the digital divide, a growing teacher shortage, and the urgent need to diversify our teacher force. At the same time, we know that our battle with the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, and our students are in need of a Secretary who places their unique and individual needs first.

We recognize the incredible challenges that lie ahead as you assume your role in this high office. We also acknowledge that at this moment, the Department of Education has an opportunity to take a bold stand by supporting all students, including those who attend public district and public charter schools. As the education community of students, parents, educators, administrators, leaders, and policymakers unite for our children, our students attending public charter schools must be included equally as part of this community.

The Association of American Educators along with the fifty undersigned education organizations is calling for equitable support for public charter schools and the families and educators who choose them. We are committed to preserving the flexibility and autonomy that make public charter schools successful and to holding all schools accountable for student achievement.

We believe that every student in America deserves access to an excellent education. We must acknowledge and address the barriers preventing students from accessing the educational options that meet their needs. As educators, it is our responsibility to ensure that the educational opportunities and methods of learning each student needs can continue without further interruption.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, public charter schools have provided the flexibility and innovation families so desperately needed for students. Ensuring effective public charter schools can continue to serve families who choose them brings us closer to delivering on the public education

promise of an excellent education for every child. Public charter schools strengthen and complement the public education system by offering innovative and creative ways of delivering education and providing best practice learning for all education systems. Public charter schools remain accountable to authorizers, educators, and families for their academic achievement, student development, and community engagement.

As Secretary of Education, we urge you to advocate for every student by **supporting high-quality public charter schools and encouraging the growth of the public charter school community.** Your support acknowledges that public charter schools deserve equitable funding and authorization decisions that meet the demand, in real-time, for families seeking to educate their children in the ways that work best according to their needs. We look to collaborate with you to discuss how school authorization, renewal, and expansion decisions might better reflect the needs of families seeking the additional options public charter schools provide. In many states, this would mean an increase in the availability of public charter schools. We also recognize that students attending public schools should receive the same public investment, regardless of the type of school they attend. This investment includes access to facilities funding and the encouraging utilization of surplus district facilities. Our students deserve nothing less.

We support public charter schools because of our steadfast commitment to public education, not in spite of it. Through high standards of achievement, greater collaboration with staff, and flexible independence, public charter schools strengthen the public education system, not threaten it.

We look forward to working with you and your team to ensure that students' needs are met and the voices of charter school educators, parents, and supporters are heard. We believe that one of the best ways to understand the impact public charter schools have on students is to engage in dialogue with those who spend their days in service, teaching, and shaping the minds of children in public charter schools across the country. We invite you to a roundtable discussion with 25 charter school educators, administrators, parents, and students to learn more about their experiences in our nation's innovative public charter schools.

Lastly, we would be pleased to organize a delegation of public school advocates serving in America's charter schools to meet with you and your staff in Washington, D.C., to discuss ways to work together to best serve our students.

Sincerely,



Colin Sharkey
Executive Director
Association of American Educators

Arizona Charter Schools Association
Association of American Educators Foundation
Bluum (Idaho)
California Charter Schools Association
Colorado League of Charter Schools
ConnCAN
DC Charter School Alliance
Delaware Charter Schools Network
DelawareCAN
Democrats for Education Reform
Diverse Charter Schools Coalition
Ed Voice (California)
EdAllies (Minnesota)
Education Action Forum of Maine
Florida Charter School Alliance
Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools
Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools
Georgia Charter Schools Association
GeorgiaCAN
HawaiiKidsCAN
Idaho Charter School Network
Illinois Network of Charter Schools
Indiana Charter School Network
JerseyCAN
Kansas Association of American Educators
Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools
Massachusetts Charter Public School Association
Michigan Association of Public School Academies
Missouri Charter Public School Association
National Association of Charter School Authorizers
National Charter Collaborative
New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association
New Schools for Alabama
New Schools for New Orleans
NewMexicoKidsCAN
North Carolina Association for Public Charter Schools
NorthCarolinaCAN
Northwest Professional Educators
NYCAN
Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools
Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools
Professional Association of Colorado Educators
Public Charter School Alliance of South Carolina
Public Charter Schools of New Mexico
TennesseeCAN
Tennessee Charter School Center
Texas Public Charter Schools Association
The League of Oregon Charter Schools
The New Teacher Project
Thomas B. Fordham Institute
Utah Association of Public Charter Schools
Washington State Charter Schools Association