

MEASURING UP TO THE MODEL: A RANKING OF STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS

“We are pleased to see that many states continue to innovate and improve their public charter school laws, ensuring that more families have access to options in our education system. We are also energized by newer states continuing to learn from those who enacted public charter school laws before them.

“We are looking forward to continuing to support public policies that foster the creation and operation of independent, public, tuition-free, and pioneering schools that are held accountable for student progress and achievement.”

NINA REES, PRESIDENT & CEO
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

ABOUT THE ANNUAL STATE CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS RANKINGS REPORT

The 2018 rankings demonstrate that many states, such as Indiana, continue to strengthen their laws based on prior indicators of success and that new states are relying heavily on those lessons learned.

For the second year in a row, the 2018 rankings measure each state’s charter school law against the National Alliance’s updated model charter school law, *New Model Law for Supporting the Growth of High-Quality Charter Public Schools: Second Edition*, released in October 2016. The Ninth Edition of *Measuring Up to the Model* ranks public charter school laws in 44 states and the District of Columbia. Each law receives a score based on 21 essential metrics, including flexibility, accountability, and equity.

INDIANA CONTINUES TO RANK #1 FOR THIRD YEAR IN A ROW WITH COLORADO, WASHINGTON, MINNESOTA, D.C., ALABAMA, MISSISSIPPI, MAINE, FLORIDA, AND KENTUCKY IN THE TOP 10.

KEY FINDINGS

Some key takeaways from this year's rankings include:

- ▶ For the third year in a row, **Indiana** has the nation's strongest charter school law in the country, ranking No. 1 (out of 45). Indiana's law does not cap charter school growth, includes multiple authorizers, and provides a fair amount of autonomy and accountability. Indiana has also made notable strides in recent years to provide more equitable funding to charter schools, although some work remains to be done.
- ▶ **Colorado** jumped from No. 5 to No. 2, in part because of legislation that the state enacted in 2017 that will provide charter schools with equitable access to a local funding stream that most districts had refused to share with charter schools (i.e., local mill levy override).
- ▶ **Kentucky** became the 44th state (along with the District of Columbia) to enact a charter school law in 2017. Kentucky lawmakers took great care in writing this law to ensure that the state heeded the lessons learned within the first quarter-century of the charter movement and also took into the account the state constitutional constraints that exist. As a result, they enacted a relatively strong charter school law, ranking No. 10.
- ▶ The **Top 10** includes a mixture of states with more mature movements (**Indiana** at No. 1, **Colorado** at No. 2, **Minnesota** at No. 4, **D.C.** at No. 8, and **Florida** at No. 9) and states with newer movements (**Washington** at No. 3, **Alabama** at No. 5, **Mississippi** at No. 6, **Maine** at No. 7, and **Kentucky** at No. 10). The fact that these states are in the Top 10 speaks to the fact that many existing states continue to strengthen their laws based on what's working (and what's not working) and that new states rely heavily on those lessons learned so they don't repeat the mistakes of the states that came before them.
- ▶ States that are enacting laws for the first time and states that are overhauling their laws are bypassing states that were previously more highly ranked, such as **Arizona**, **Louisiana**, and **New York**. That doesn't mean that the laws have gotten weaker in the states being bypassed. They remain strong. What it does mean, though, is that more and more states have better and better laws across the country, a good place to be if you believe that all states should have high-quality charter school laws.
- ▶ **Maryland** has the nation's weakest charter school law, ranking No. 45 (out of 45). While Maryland's law does not cap charter school growth, it allows only district authorizers and provides little autonomy, insufficient accountability, and inequitable funding to charter schools. Rounding out the bottom five states are **Iowa** (No. 41), **Wyoming** (No. 42), **Alaska** (No. 43), and **Kansas** (No. 44).

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

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