

PENNSYLVANIA

RANK 34, SCORE 11/33



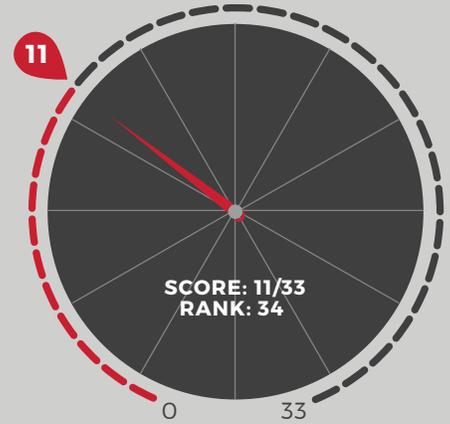
STATE WITH MANY CHARTERS (100+)
175 CHARTER SCHOOLS
 AVERAGE % OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (5-9%)



DISTRICT AUTHORIZING STATE
72 AUTHORIZERS
92% OF SCHOOLS AUTHORIZED BY LEAS



YEAR LAW ESTABLISHED: **1997**



YEARLY COMPARISON

	1. Who Authorizes (6 points)	2. Standards (3 points)	3. Evaluations (3 points)	4. Sanctions (3 points)	5. Reports (3 points)	6. PMR (3 points)	7. Renewals (6 points)	8. Default Closure (6 points)	Total (33 points)
2016	4	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	11/33
2015	4	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	11/33

OUTDATED LAW OVERSHADOWS IMPROVEMENTS IN PRACTICE

Pennsylvania’s charter law has not been significantly reformed in nearly 20 years. Robust policy reform will strengthen the foundation for school accountability and authorizer quality and ensure the law keeps pace with the sector’s evolution. The state’s largest authorizer is undertaking initiatives to improve school and authorizer quality, from establishing rigorous measures for renewal and approval to issuing robust annual charter evaluations.

NACSA RECOMMENDS

- **Endorse professional standards for charter school authorizing.** Professional standards bring consistency and transparency to authorizing practices and ensure that strong practices continue regardless of the political environment. This is especially important given the variability of authorizing practices throughout the state and over the history of the charter sector.
- **Reform state policies to ensure that charter school closure decisions, once made, can be executed in a timely manner.** The multiple layers of administrative and judicial appeal processes established by Pennsylvania law are intended to ensure charter schools have due process when faced with a closure decision. In practice, the system stymies efforts to close even demonstrably, perpetually failing charter schools. Reforms to the appeals timeline and standards of judgment, which could include a default closure policy, can preserve due process while enforcing accountability.
- **Reform state protocols to ensure the required annual charter reports include clear information on the academic performance of each charter school.** State law empowers the State Secretary of Education to make such a change through rules, regulations, or guidance. This parallels some of the initiatives being undertaken by the largest authorizer and makes sure all authorizers engage in similar performance management practices.
- **Create mechanisms for the oversight of all authorizers and, if necessary, intervention.**

- **Create a statewide alternative authorizer, such as an Independent Charter Board or an Achievement School District**, a statewide recovery school district with limited jurisdiction that acts like an Independent Charter Board.
- **Ensure state policy provides authorizers with meaningful access to necessary charter school data in a timely fashion.** Pennsylvania authorizers report some difficulty accessing basic charter school enrollment and performance data necessary to perform adequate charter school oversight. NACSA encourages the state to work with authorizers and charter schools to identify and address any challenges.

THE SCORE

POLICY	POINTS	DETAILS & CONTEXT
AUTHORIZER QUALITY		
Who Authorizes	4/6	LEAs; SEA on appeal; ¹ SEA for virtual schools only. The State Department of Education oversees 14 virtual charter schools. In addition, consortia of LEAs may authorize regional charter schools that serve larger areas. The Charter School Appeal Board, an independent appointed board, presides over appeals statewide and may overturn or uphold LEA authorizing decisions. Schools approved by the Board are then authorized by the original LEA authorizer or, if the original authorizer refuses, by the SEA. The majority of Pennsylvania's charter schools are in Philadelphia and authorized by the Philadelphia School District, which in turn is governed by the School Reform Commission (SRC). New in 2016: In February, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a state law provision that allowed the SRC to waive provisions of the state school code in the interest of financial stability; historically, the SRC had relied on this authority to impose additional restrictions on chartering.
Authorizer Standards	0/3	State law does not adopt, provide, or endorse quality standards for authorizers.
Authorizer Evaluations	0/3	State law does not require or provide for the evaluation of authorizers based on standards for quality authorizing.
Authorizer Sanctions	0/3	State law does not provide for authorizer sanctions that restrict the granting of new charters by the authorizer, remove schools from the authorizer's portfolio, or remove authorizing authority.
SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY		
Reports on Performance	0/3	State law requires charter schools to produce annual reports, with content governed by rules, regulations, and guidance from the State Secretary of Education. Unfortunately, the existing report format does not include annual reporting on the academic performance of each charter school.
Performance Management and Replication	1/3	State law requires a charter contract but not performance frameworks. The law does not explicitly encourage or address replication of successful schools.
Renewal Standard	6/6	By law, authorizers have discretion to close schools for failing to meet student performance standards. However, in practice the legal and administrative appeals process can create significant delays in the execution of non-renewal and revocation decisions.
Default Closure	0/6	State law does not provide for default closure for failure to meet minimum academic standards.

TOTAL POINTS: 11/33, RANK 34

¹ The Charter School Appeal Board (CAB) presides over both brick-and-mortar and virtual school appeals. Schools approved by the CAB are then authorized by the LEA or the SEA.