

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

FEBRUARY 14, 2018



- The National Alliance released a model state charter school law in 2009.
- We began analyzing, scoring, and ranking state charter school laws against the model law in 2010.
- We released an updated version of the model law in 2016.
- This year's state charter school laws rankings report was the ninth one overall and the second one that analyzes, scores, and ranks states against the updated model law.

- This year's report 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** has the nation's strongest charter school law in the country for the third year in a row. 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 #5 to #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 D.C.) to enact a charter public 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 school movement and took into the account the state constitutional constraints that exist. As a result, they enacted a relatively strong charter school law, ranking #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 public 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).