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On the Agenda

State Board Actions on Charter Schools

Charter schools are far from uncharted territory for state boards of education: Boards in all states with charter laws have a role in strengthening the charter system. Five state boards serve as their state’s sole charter authorizers. Others act as authorizers in specific situations, oversee independent authorizers, or appoint members of independent charter boards (see table 2 in Bryan Hassel’s article in this issue).

In state board meetings during the summer of 2016, nearly half of all state boards included charter schools on their agendas. In the 24 states that considered charter-related topics in their June, July, or August meetings, 53 percent of the relevant agenda items addressed charter authorization. The vast majority of those authorization items involved initial approval of charter schools and modifications of approval stipulations, such as opening dates. Only one in ten authorization items on state boards’ agendas were related to charter renewal and termination.

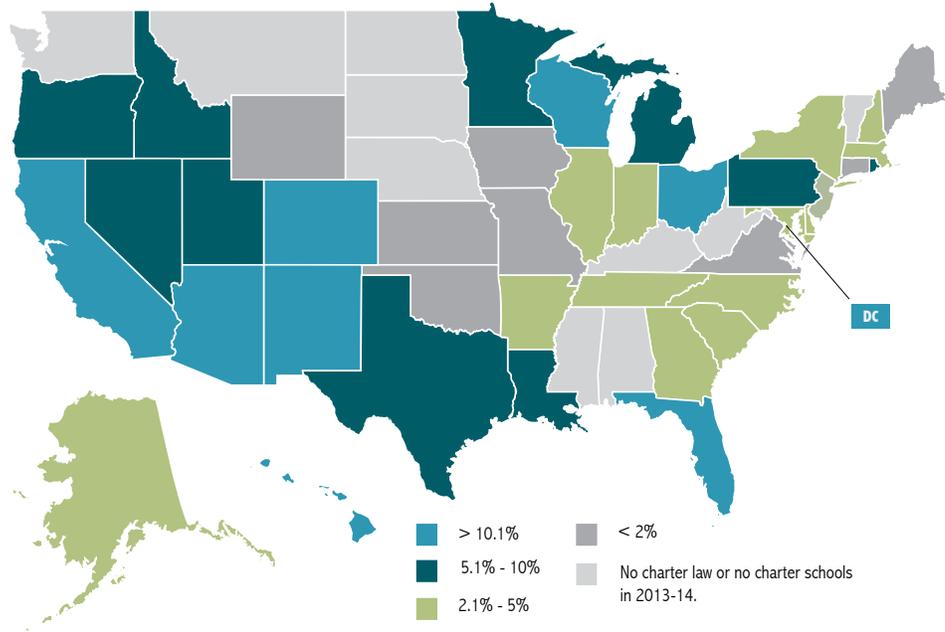
The remaining 47 percent of charter school items ranged broadly. Some boards

considered charters’ roles in state budgets or strategic plans, while others heard presentations on charter efficacy or how charters serve minorities. Boards also confronted issues ranging from charter funding models to the approval of waivers to grant noncharter public schools the same flexibility received by charters in their districts. State boards took action on 75 percent of the charter school items they considered, while the remaining 25 percent were informational.

Some states, such as Utah, considered the impact of statewide legislation on charters in addition to traditional public schools. During its meeting, the Utah State Board of Education learned that a change in the control of a statewide data system could disproportionately affect charter schools’ ability to constructively use and safeguard students’ personal data.¹ ■

¹Utah State Board of Education, “Utah State Board of Education Meeting Minutes, August 11-12, 2016,” accessed October 27, 2016, <http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Meetings/Agenda/Minutes/2016/August11Minutes.aspx>; Utah State Office of Education, “Aspire FAQ,” accessed October 27, 2016, <http://www.schools.utah.gov/computerservices/Services/Student-Information-System/FAQ2.aspx>.

Charter Schools’ Share of Total Public Schools, 2013–14



Sources: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, “Public Charter Schools Dashboard: Schools,” 2013–14; M. Glander, “Selected Statistics from the Public Elementary and Secondary Education Universe: School Year 2013–14,” NCES 2015-151 (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).