



Dear Members of the Rockefeller Institute,

Thank you for taking the lead on this important study of Foundation Aid. Your work can ensure that every child in New York State gets the support they need for a sound basic education and to grow into responsible citizens of our state.

At Charter Champions of Rochester, we believe in the boundless potential of every child and understand that a quality education is the key to unlocking that potential. Our organization supports the 27 Rochester-area charter schools in Rochester that serve some of our most vulnerable children.

Same Students, Less Funding

Rochester's 7,969 charter school students face significant challenges - 83% are economically disadvantaged and 3% are experiencing homelessness. The majority of these students are from marginalized communities, with 64% identifying as Black and 22% as Hispanic or Latinx. These demographics closely mirror those of the Rochester City School District. However, these charter students receive only three-fifths of the state funding their district peers receive.

This funding gap has widened since the early days of Foundation Aid. In 2010, Rochester's charter students received 83% of the funding provided to district students¹—enough to offer a sound education and competitive wages for charter teachers, who are more likely to be Black or Latinx than in typical teacher pools.

The disparities extend between regions. Charter students in Rochester receive \$14,216 per student, compared to \$17,068 per student in Albany, despite Rochester's higher proportion of low-income students than Albany (71%²). Albany's slightly higher cost of living (2% more than Rochester) doesn't justify this 20% funding difference³.

Including charter schools in the Foundation Aid formula is essential to repairing these inequities and streamlining school funding.

How New York State Can Ensure Fair Funding

Charter Champions proposes the following recommendations:

1. **Direct Additional Funds to High-Needs Students:** The funding formula should allocate additional resources to low-income students, marginalized racial and ethnic groups, English Learners, and Students with Disabilities.
2. **Ensure Adequate Funding for Essential Services:** The funds must be sufficient to cover the full range of services students require.



3. **Use Current Data:** The funding formula should be based on up-to-date student demographic information, continually reflecting the most recent census data.
4. **Implement Student-Centered Funding:** All funding—including adjustments for inflation (CPI), regional costs, phased-in funding, extra support for students with disabilities, facilities funds, and any set-asides—should follow each student to the LEA and school they attend.

These changes would ensure that the students with the greatest needs receive the necessary resources for a sound basic education.

Supporting Evidence

Dr. Bruce Baker of Rutgers University provides compelling evidence in support of these proposals. His research underscores that, while money alone cannot solve all educational challenges, a more equitable and adequate allocation of financial resources is necessary for improving educational outcomes⁴: [How Money Matters Brief](#)

While Charter Champions and Dr. Baker may differ on many school policy issues, we can all agree on the critical importance of fair funding.

Addressing Federal Title Grants

You may ask, “Don’t Federal Title grants cover the additional expense of educating low-income, English-Learner, and homeless students?”

The answer is a resounding, “No.”

Federal Title grants are intended to supplement, not supplant, schools’ core instructional program. A strong core program, however, is exactly what students need. This requires competitive teacher salaries and high-quality curriculum.

For Students with Disabilities and English Learners, adequate funding means having enough qualified, full-time teachers to provide their core instruction. Unfortunately, federal funds are often insufficient. For instance, Title III may provide a few hundred dollars per English Learner, far less than what’s needed to hire a qualified teacher.

The Cost of Equity

Research suggests that increasing per-pupil spending by 21.7% over 12 years for low-income children could eliminate the educational attainment gap between them and their more affluent peers (Baker, 2018). This represents a shift for New York State, which currently spends 8.8%



less in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty ones⁵. Your study of Foundation Aid represents the right first step to make that shift.

In closing, we thank you for your dedication to ensuring that New York State adequately supports its children and their futures.

Sincerely,

Charter Champions of Rochester

Dr. Paul Miller, CEO

Melinda Goldberg, Chief of Staff

Joseph Klein, Board Chair

Carlos Garcia, Treasurer

Rev. Robert Hoggard, Secretary

Michael Pearlson, Board Member

Michael Patterson, Board Member

Dr. Wayne Lewis, Board Member

Joseph D. Fagnoli, Board Member

Elissa Klein, Board Member



Methodology and Sources

¹ In 2023 dollars, RCSD received \$17,971 per pupil compared to \$15,005 per pupil at Rochester-area charters. This compares to \$23,374 per pupil at RCSD today versus \$14,216 at charters.

District revenue was pulled from NYS Budget Enacted School Aid Runs, omitting: Universal Pre-K, Special Services, High Cost/Private Excess Cost, Transportation, and Charter School Transitional. These numbers were retrieved from the General Formula Aid Output Reports at <https://eservices.nysed.gov/publicsams/reports.do#stay>.

We added the local hold-harmless revenue (\$119M) and subtracted district spending on transportation above state allocation and transfers to charters, per RCSD 2009-2010 and 2022-2023 CAFRs (<https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=14&DomainID=32&PageID=194&ModuleInstanceID=633&ViewID=1e008a8a-8e8a-4ca0-9472-a8f4a723a4a7&IsMoreExpandedView=True>)

The resulting net state and local revenue was divided by the K-12 enrollment from the RCSD CAFRs, as this enrollment was slightly higher than the state report card and yielded the most conservative estimate of district revenue.

Charter per pupils are from SED Final 2009-2010 Charter School Basic Tuition (https://stateaid.nysed.gov/charter/html_docs/charter_0910_final.htm) and SED Charter School Tuition Rates and Definitions, 2022-2023 Tuition (https://stateaid.nysed.gov/charter/html_docs/prior_years_charter_rates.htm).

All funds are presented in 2023 dollars. Jan 2010 to Jan 2023 conversion comes from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. CPI Inflation Calculator (retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

² <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2023&instid=800000055729>

³ <https://www.nerdwallet.com/cost-of-living-calculator/compare/rochester-ny-vs-albany-ny>

⁴ Baker, B. D. (2018). How money matters for schools (research brief). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

⁵ Baker, B. D. et al (2021, December). *The Adequacy And Fairness Of State School Finance Systems*. Retrieved August 26, 2024, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED616520.pdf>