

Executive Summary:

The Alabama Innovative Charter Schools Act

Enrollment

- Charter schools are public schools and will be open to all students within the local school system where they are located.
- Discrimination based on race, religion, income level, disability, academic achievement, or athletic ability is strictly prohibited.
- Charter schools cannot charge tuition.

Authorizers

- Local Boards of Education that register with the State Department of Education will be the primary authorizers of charter schools.
- The State Board of Education may authorize charter schools on appeal from a local board of education or in districts where the local board is not a registered authorizer.
- However, all charter schools approved by the State Board of Education must serve students in the lowest performing schools in the state.
- Private schools are strictly prohibited from becoming charter schools.

Organization

- Charter schools must follow state education statutes related to civil rights, health, safety, accountability, student testing, state content standards, competitive bid requirements, and open meetings and open records laws.
- Charter schools must provide instruction for at least the same number of days as other public schools (currently 180 days).
- Every charter contract must contain a provision guaranteeing due process to all employees pursuant to procedures adopted by the charter school's governing board.
- Charter schools are not subject to the state minimum salary schedule and will pay employees based on policies set by each charter school's governing board.
- Employees are subject to the same criminal history background checks and fingerprinting requirements applicable to other schools.

Accountability

- A "performance framework" is required in every charter contract that will include academic growth and proficiency, financial performance, and annual performance targets.
- Local boards of education and the State Board of Education are required to continually monitor the performance and compliance of the charter schools they authorize.
- A charter school contract may be revoked at any time if the charter school violates its contract or the law, fails to make progress, or fails to meet standards of fiscal management.

Funding

- Charter schools will receive per-student funding based on their enrollment
- Charter schools must have an annual independent audit.