

Washington State Charter School Commission

2026 First Quarter Policy Updates

For Immediate Release

April 23, 2026

Olympia, WA - At its April 23, 2026, meeting the Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) unanimously passed policy addressing potential disruptions to student learning, reducing barriers to access of public-school options, and providing practical, technical support to help schools meet community expectations. The Commission engaged in regular business, including charter contract ratification, school performance and compliance oversight, as well as school site visits. The Commission also addressed funding inequities and barriers to access that impact public school options. In parallel, it provided updates on its proactive technical assistance to equip schools with the tools and support needed to meet high expectations and serve their communities effectively.

New business includes agency priorities to support Washington’s public schools by anticipating student needs in balance with its regulatory responsibilities. Passage of the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Policy is a proactive step by the Commission designed to ensure ongoing access to charter public schools in the event a school moves or is closed. It was initially approved in principle by the Commission in 2025 Q4 following deliberative process and adoption of a Relocation Policy, an additional measure established to minimize potential disruptions to student learning.

“Public schools are under duress, and we are determined to do what we can to make sure that public process is protected but that bureaucracy does not affect access to education,” said Kyle Burleigh, Chair Commissioner of the Washington State Charter School Commission

“Charter public schools, by law, serve students who are too often left behind in traditional public schools. Our policymaking will continue to focus on easing and improving public schools that meet their needs.” Burleigh said.

Charter public schools are **free, non-sectarian** and **open to everyone**. In exchange for greater measures of accountability, charter public schools are unbound by curricula that is not a fit for the communities they serve even though their charters also require that they meet the same academic standards required of all public schools. Policies like the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Policy are critical to ensuring students have access to public schools that can flex to make sure they are learning and building confidence for life after graduation.

“The pandemic showed us how critical it is to protect stable, consistent access to school,” continued Burleigh. “By addressing potential barriers to the classroom that meet our agency’s regulatory responsibility and taking action to ensure solutions are ready on a just-in-case basis, we’re making moves to stay in front of what public school students may need instead of racing to catch up when education is threatened in some way.”



The Washington State Charter School Commission is an independent state agency and the main [authorizer](#) of charter public schools. It was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process for qualified non-profits who wish to open a charter public school. The agency also monitors and provides oversight holding schools and charter public school boards accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission was formed following the passage of Initiative 1240 by state voters in 2012, which created the charter public school system in our state. In Washington, all charter public schools are staffed by certified teachers, and held accountable to the same state and national standards as traditional public schools.

Charter public schools earn authorization following a rigorous application process led by local community leaders, which means that the classrooms of each school reflect the community being served.

According to the 2024 October Enrollment Report on Student Demographics, approximately **67%** of charter public school students are Global Majority compared to a statewide public-school average of approximately **52%**. Charter public school students with disabilities represent approximately **15%** of all students in charter public schools, which is generally in alignment with public schools statewide.

To learn more about the Commission, its responsibilities and charter public schools in Washington, please visit our website: <https://charterschool.wa.gov>

About Washington State's Charter School Commission

Washington State's Charter School Commission was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and holding charters accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout Washington with an emphasis on schools designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students, providing leadership and oversight that is consistent with national principles and standards of charter school authorizers and the provisions of Washington's charter school law.

#