

## For Immediate Release:

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## Washington State Charter School Commission Adopts Policy Ensuring Safe, Stable Learning Environments During Relocation

Charter public schools can request relocation in accordance with Commission oversight that evaluates original geographic boundary, community need, academic and operational performance, equity and access for all students

Olympia, WA – The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) has adopted and is in process of implementing a new policy allowing charter public schools to request relocation of their school based on changing conditions that impact their current facility. Circumstances such as unforeseen facility challenges, neighborhood redevelopment and displacement, or urgent safety concerns, can be detrimental to student learning and well-being. The new policy allows the Commission to consider requests to relocate within a regulatory framework that accounts for student safety, school performance, community need, equity and access for all students, and that follows all applicable laws and Commission policies.

"Because charter public schools are still not guaranteed state-provided facilities or facilities funding, they are often forced to operate in repurposed commercial spaces. While these spaces are adapted for learning, they remain vulnerable to rising rents and surrounding activity that is not conducive to a safe, stable school environment. This inequitable reality sometimes risks the stability of our schools, and the students and families they serve. However, through policies like this and continued partnership with legislators, families, students and communities, we are working toward a future where every charter public school has access to secure, appropriate, and sustainable facilities worthy of our students." said Marcus Harden, Executive Director of the Commission. "We have been working with families, school leaders and community partners across the state and heard loud and clear that high-quality classrooms should be among our highest priorities. Adopting this relocation policy acknowledges that school safety and sustainability is not predictable or static but safe, stable schools must be."

The Commission has centered community need and input in the new policy, which also reflects the rigor of Washington State's charter public school laws. A relocation cannot be considered viable unless it demonstrates both operational feasibility and long-term stability. The Commission expects schools to

demonstrate that the proposed site is not only physically sound and compliant with all safety regulations, but also geographically accessible including reasonable commute times and equitable transportation options. Schools must demonstrate that they have engaged in inclusive, multilingual, and transparent outreach with the families they serve and who may be served in the new location. Critically, relocation must not jeopardize financial or organizational stability. Schools will be required to provide a comprehensive relocation budget that includes clear funding sources and realistic cost projections and must provide five-year financial projections showing that the relocation will not compromise instructional quality, staffing, or student services. The Commission will evaluate whether the move strengthens or undermines the school's long-term sustainability and may require contingency plans, enhanced reporting, or third-party evaluations to ensure financial risks are addressed proactively.

The new policy was adopted by the Commission on September 18 following a deliberative process led by its staff.

The Washington State Charter School Commission is an independent state agency and the <u>main authorizer</u> 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 tuition-free, non-sectarian, open to all students, publicly funded, staffed by certified teachers, and held accountable to the same state and national standards as traditional public schools.

Charter public schools are authorized 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: <a href="https://charterschool.wa.gov">https://charterschool.wa.gov</a>.

## **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 to hold 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.

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