



Friday, October 7, 2022

The Charter School *Advocate*

FALL PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

The MACS 2022 Public Policy Forum took place on Thursday, September 29th at the Union Depot in St. Paul. The forum began with a brief advocacy training and conversation with participants surrounding building relationships with public officials and communicating key messages about their schools.

The forum then focused on examining the policy issues on the MACS agenda for the 2023 legislative session. Given that 2023 is the budget year, the focus was on equitable funding issues for charter school students. The participants delved into the Issue Primers the Association has developed on Excess Operating Levy funding and Extended Time Revenue, and next discussed the need for a rational approach for charter school facilities and policy issues on Re-balancing Charter School Accountability vs. Autonomy. The group also briefly discussed the workforce situation schools find themselves in and ended the session with an update on the Cruz-Guzman Case.

Advocacy resources and Issue Primers shared at the forum will be available to the MACS community in the coming weeks on the Association's website.



CHARTER SCHOOL PIONEER AWARD

At the Annual Meeting & Celebration, we recognized **former U.S. Senator David Durenberger** for his trailblazing and pioneering work to pass the Federal Charter School Program.

On July 31, 1991, only 57 days after the enactment of Minnesota's first-in-the-nation chartered public school law, Senator Durenberger along with Senator Joseph Lieberman introduced **the PUBLIC SCHOOL REDEFINITION ACT of 1991**. The purpose of the Act was to establish a demonstration program to "*encourage state educational agencies to assist teachers, parents and communities establish new public schools...*". The bill was finally passed in 1994 as a component of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Since its enactment **in 1994**, the Federal Charter School Program (CSP) has provided over 4 billion dollars to help grow and spread the charter school movement. Over that 28-year period, Minnesota has received over \$155 million for growing charter schools, which today enroll over 7% of public-school students in the state.



NOTE: *Senator Durenberger was not able to attend the celebration due to illness, so the award was accepted by Jon Schroeder, who served on Senator Durenberger’s staff when the CSP was introduced and passed. The award will be presented in person this fall to the Senator.*

10 PASSENGER TYPE III VEHICLES

Schools across Minnesota are currently struggling with the availability of 10 passenger Type III vehicles as alternatives to school buses for student transportation. It has been reported that major manufacturers have stopped production on most or all 10 vehicle vans. Without another option, schools that depend on this as a transportation mode are wondering what they should do.

The MACS team has explored the related statutes and reached out to the state school bus associations, Department of Transportation, Department of Public Safety, MN Association of School Administrators, MN Rural Education Association, and Minnesota Department of Education to explore the problem and inquire about solutions.

We’ve found that while there is a state statute that prevents modifying larger vehicles into Type III vehicles, a set of Federal Safety Standards from the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)** also forbids it. Due to this, the Department of Public Safety does not currently see a legislative path to create more flexibility for Type III vehicles in law without an updated set of safety standards from NHTSA endorsing any changes. However, they do suggest some short-term options that may be helpful.

If this is an issue for your school, we can provide information on those short-term options. Contact Joey Cienian, MACS Public Policy and Advocacy Director, at Joey@mncharterschools.org or 651.789.3090 Ext. 2.

CLEAN SCHOOL BUS REBATES

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced that it will nearly double its first round of rebates for "[clean school buses](#)", awarding \$965 million in response to high demand. The rebates allow schools to replace existing diesel buses with zero- and low-emissions alternatives, including those that run on electricity and natural gas, and get the equipment necessary to support them. The money is part of a \$5 billion fund created through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, signed by President Joe Biden last November. The funding for school buses will be distributed over five years.

EdWeek – 9/30/2022

NEW: MN COVID-19 SCHOOL TESTING PROGRAM GRANT

Minnesota has designated \$25 million of its Epidemiology Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Reopening Schools Grant for a **new grant round for public schools** to support school-based screening testing activities intended to safely keep schools open. Additionally, these resources may be used to support items or activities aimed at implementing prevention strategies necessary to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

This grant is being made available to all public, charter and tribal schools for the purpose of creating a COVID-19 testing program at schools. Please email COVIDTesting.MDE@state.mn.us if you have questions about eligible expenses.

The deadline to apply for this new round of grant funding is October 31, 2022. The funds can be used to cover expenses **occurring July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023.** Final draw deadline is July 21, 2023.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS GUIDANCE

This week, the US DOE Office of Civil Rights issued a resource tool about how Title IX, the federal discrimination law, applies to pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions in students and adults. To access the tool, click [here](#).

FEDERAL CSP REGULATIONS UPDATE

The **Michigan and Ohio Charter School Associations** have filed a federal lawsuit to overturn the new regulations that the US Department of Education implemented this summer. The lawsuit states that the US Department of Education violated the Administrative Procedure Act on three grounds: 1] the rules went beyond statutory authority, 2] the rulemaking was arbitrary and capricious, and 3] there was a lack of meaningful opportunity to comment. The lawsuit argues that the rulemaking violated the Appointments Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

ELECTION DAY - NO SCHOOL MEETINGS OR EVENTS

A public elementary or secondary school may not schedule a school sponsored event **between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.** on the day of a regularly scheduled election.

"Unleashing education from convention" - is more than the MACS motto, it is a reminder of our purpose, our goals and it serves as a clarion **Call To Action.**

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