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PRESIDENT OF THE NORTHEAST CHARTER SCHOOLS NETWORK**

**Submitted to Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2014-2015 Executive Budget  
Proposal for Elementary & Secondary Education  
January 28, 2014**

Distinguished committee chairpersons and respected members of the New York Senate and Assembly, I'd like to thank you for the chance to speak to you today about the 2014-2015 Executive Budget Proposal on Elementary & Secondary Education.

The Northeast Charter Schools Network (formerly known as the New York Charter Schools Association) is the only statewide membership organization for the state's 233 public charter schools and their 90,000 students. Our mission is to support and grow the state's high quality public charter school movement.

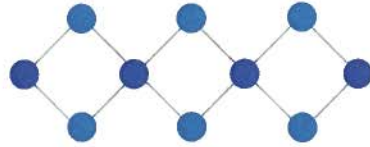
The Governor's Executive Budget proposal provides an important opportunity to enact an equity agenda for the state's public charter schools. We believe that equity should be the guiding principle when lawmakers make decisions about charter school funding, access to public school space, services that can help schools better serve English language learners and special education, and pre-kindergarten.

**Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Public Charter Schools**

We applaud the governor for including charter schools in his proposal to expand the state's universal pre-kindergarten program. We will need all hands on deck if we want to offer high-quality preschool to all the kids that need it – and charters can help. There simply aren't enough providers to meet the need, and New York is home to some of the nation's best charter schools, so this proposal would create a match based on both common sense and expediency. We look forward to working with the legislature to help make the expansion of the state's Universal Pre-K program a reality.

**Smart Schools Bond Act and Public Charter Schools**

The Governor's budget proposal rightfully acknowledges the challenge of providing space for children who will attend new Universal Prekindergarten programs across the state by including preschool facilities construction or renovation in his signature bonding initiative. But as written, the proposed legislation would not include public charter schools, even though we would also be eligible preschool providers. Charters do not



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receive facilities funding from the state for their K-12 programs, so this exclusion would only compound the myriad of facilities challenges faced by our schools. We recommend that lawmakers amend the proposal to make it clear that public charter schools with preschool programs would be eligible recipients of these funds.

**Per-Pupil Funding for Public Charter Schools**

We think returning charter schools to formula funding is fair, but there needs to be reasonable protections for the schools that would be negatively impacted by this proposal. We look forward to working with the legislature to address this issue.