

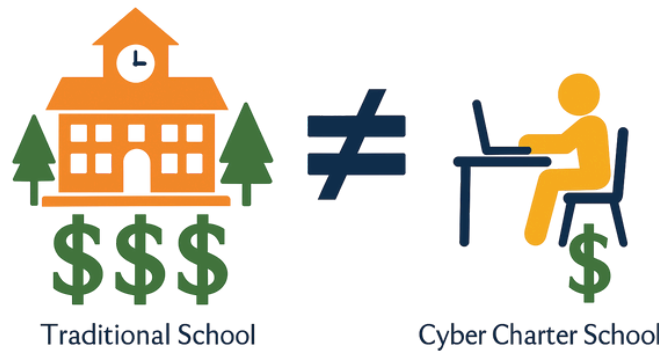
# TELL PA LAWMAKERS TO PROTECT TAXPAYERS AND END CYBER CHARTER WASTE



Pennsylvania has 14 cyber charter schools. These are privately-operated public schools that are granted a charter and authorized to operate by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Any student can attend any cyber charter school no matter what school district they live in. School districts are required by state law to make tuition payments for students who live in their districts and enroll in cyber charter schools. These tuition payments total more than \$1 billion annually and are made up primarily of property tax dollars that are collected at the local level in each district.

The state sets charter school tuition rates for each district that are based on the cost of educating students in their home school districts' buildings. For the 2024-2025 school year, tuition for regular education ranges from \$7,659-\$28,959 per student. Special education tuition ranges from \$18,627-\$93,019 per student, regardless of the cost of services the student requires.

These equivalent tuition rates may seem sensible at first glance, but operationally, they do not add up. Cyber charter schools educate students who are at home on a computer, not in a brick-and-mortar school. Cyber charter schools do not need to employ security or maintenance/custodial staff or heat, cool, and maintain school district facilities and grounds. **Cyber charters' operational and overhead costs come nowhere close to those of traditional public schools – yet they are funded as though the costs are the same.**



Because cyber charter tuition payments are not based on the actual, lower cost of online education, school districts end up paying far more than what cyber charters need to educate a student.

Right to Know requests and a recent state audit show that cyber charters are hoarding hundreds of millions tax dollars from school districts in bank accounts at the same time they are spending millions on items unrelated to educating children, including dining, entertainment, expensive advertising campaigns, lavish contracts with for-profit management services, extensive real estate acquisitions, and more.

## These are expenditures made by a cyber charter using taxpayer dollars.

- Dining
- Wineries and breweries
- Professional sports tickets
- Catering orders
- Vehicle purchases
- Advertising and promotion
- A platinum corporate membership to the Hill Society and
- Much more!!!



# CYBER CHARTERS ARE AWASH IN EXCESS FUNDING THAT THEY WASTE AND HOARD



[Auditor General Tim DeFoor's recent audit of cyber charter schools documents the following:](#)

- Fund balances of the five cyber charter schools audited increased \$365 million, or 144 percent, from \$254 million as of July 1, 2020, to \$619 million, as of June 30, 2023.
- Commonwealth Charter Academy (CCA) lavishes \$400/month fuel stipends on all employees that work full time in a Family Service Center, no matter how far they drive to get to work. CCA also spent nearly \$200 million purchasing and renovating properties during the audit period.
- PA Cyber's unrestricted fund balance of \$217.5 million as of June 30, 2023, was more than its expenditures for the 2022-23 fiscal year.
- Reach Cyber Charter School provided approximately \$4.3 million in gift cards to students and their families during the audit period.

Our own research documents how cyber charters waste millions of tax dollars from school districts on dining, entertainment, advertising and more.

## TELL STATE LAWMAKERS TO PROTECT TAXPAYERS AND END CYBER CHARTER WASTE

The tax dollars that cyber charter schools waste and hoard are taken away from school districts that are unconstitutionally underfunded by more than \$4 billion and that lack basic and essential resources that students need to be successful academically. They are taken away from school districts that are forced to raise property taxes year in and year out – so that they can pay cyber charter tuition bills that exceed what these schools actually need to educate students at home on a computer.

**The Pennsylvania legislature's continued failure to take action to end the excessive profiteering that is occurring in the cyber charter sector wastes property tax dollars, hurts home and business owners, and puts at risk our public schools' potential to deliver a quality education for all.**

The General Assembly and the Governor's office must work together to enact a flat tuition rate of \$8000 for regular education students. This will more closely align district payments to cyber charters with the actual cost of educating a student at home on a computer.

State lawmakers must take action **this year** to ensure that property tax dollars will be invested in educating students. Pennsylvanians cannot afford for this waste to continue.

**Scan to send a letter to your state lawmakers and Governor Shapiro urging them to support cyber charter reform as part of the 2025-2026 budget.**



\* Every single cyber charter in Pennsylvania ranks below state averages in terms of four year cohort graduation rates.

\*\* Data from the PA Future Ready Index.

School	Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate
PA State Average *	87.6%
21st Century Cyber Charter School **	68.1%
Achievement House Cyber Charter School	50.0%
Agora Cyber Charter School	50.6%
Aspira Bilingual Cyber Charter School	61.5%
Central PA Digital Learning	60.0%
Commonwealth Charter Academy	64.3%
Esperanza Academy Cyber Charter School	63.6%
Insight PA Cyber Charter School	68.1%
PA Cyber Charter School	61.0%
Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School	75.6%
PA Distance Learning Center	59.6%
Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School	83.2%
Pennwood Cyber Charter School	N/a
Reach Cyber Charter School	80.0%



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