2025 Annual Report

NORTH CAROLINA COALITION FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

We protect and promote public charter schools.

> “I’ve been very impressed with the success that the Coalition has had over the last few legislative cycles to move the ball down the field. Really with kind of every priority that they’ve had, they’ve met with success. And I think that they do a fantastic job of being strategic and advocating for charter schools in the state as a whole.”
>
> – ***Todd Godbey,*** *Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington*
> *Member, Charter Schools Review Board*

Mission

The Coalition serves member schools by keeping charter school stakeholders actively informed of legislative issues, advocating for equal charter school funding, and seeking autonomy of schools at both statutory and regulatory levels.

Vision

The Coalition is the leading voice in North Carolina’s school choice movement, while keeping charter school leaders apprised of policy and legislative issues affecting their success. We work to communicate, educate, and advocate.

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Back cover: Thank you to our Coalition Champions and Corporate Members!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jonathan Bryant, Chair
Chief Administrator, Lincoln Charter School

Shelly Shope, Vice Chair
CEO, Pinnacle Classical Academy

Helen Nance, Secretary
Chief Administrative Officer, Gray Stone Day School

Gregg Sinders, Treasurer
Board Member, Pine Springs Preparatory Academy
North Carolina Development Director, Charter One

Sandeep Aggarwal
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Donald Bryson
CEO, John Locke Foundation

Megan DeKraker
Chief of External Relations,
National Heritage Academies

Andrew Harris
CEO, Northeast Academy for Aerospace & Advanced Technologies

Paula Jackson
Chief of Strategic Operations and
Senior Vice President, CSUSA

Garrett McNeill
Board Member, Sugar Creek Charter School
Real Estate Acquisition & Development,
Movement Foundation

Andrew Moceri
Executive Director, Pine Lake Preparatory

Shannon Stein
Superintendent, Lake Norman Charter School

Robert (Bob) Touchton
Sales Specialist Charter Schools,
Anthony Property Group (APG)

Dave Machado
Executive Director,
North Carolina Coalition for Charter Schools

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

A new chapter ushers in growing influence

JONATHAN BRYANT

This past year was a big one for the Coalition! As many of you know, Dave Machado took the Coalition helm in February 2025, stepping in as executive director following the retirement of Lindalyn Kakadelis, our founding leader.

This was the Coalition's first major leadership transition, and it was a successful one. As you peruse the pages of this annual report, I feel confident you'll agree.

Across 2025, Dave has proven to be a highly effective leader, guiding our advocacy organization into a new and exciting chapter, with growing influence. Our legislative and policy victories are reshaping the charter school landscape powerfully, and for the better. These successes have also solidified our organization's place as North Carolina's authoritative and leading charter school voice.

So, what did Coalition advocacy look like in 2025? A significant focus for us at the North Carolina General Assembly was on clarifying and strengthening the role of the state's Charter Schools Review Board. We accomplished that goal by pushing for and securing passage of Senate Bill 254/Session Law 2025-80. Among other things, this new law requires that any rules or policies impacting charter schools must first be approved by the Review Board before they can be adopted by the State Board of Education. As you might imagine, this is a very big deal for charter schools! Think about it: Now, all rules and policies impacting charter success and sustainability must first pass muster with charter experts who understand and value our sector.

In addition, the Coalition hosted our fourth annual Charter Advocacy Summit in early 2026 with yet another sold-out crowd. In all, around 300 charter stakeholders registered to attend the 2026 Summit, representing over 120 North Carolina charter schools. Both metrics represent records for us! I believe these numbers testify to the Summit's role as an essential annual networking event and information resource for charter leaders and stakeholders.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank all of you for your support. As our stalwart partners and friends, you make our work possible. Truly, it is an honor to serve as your charter school voice in Raleigh.

With appreciation,

JONATHAN BRYANT, ED.D.
Board Chair, North Carolina Coalition for Charter Schools
Chief Administrator, Lincoln Charter School, Lincolnton, NC

Advocacy

The Coalition secured major legislative gains at the North Carolina General Assembly, focused intensively around strengthening the role of the Charter Schools Review Board. We also advocated for favorable charter funding provisions and measures to protect charter autonomy and flexibility.

LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Strengthening overall Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) authority by securing passage of Senate Bill 254/Session Law 2025-80.
- Ensuring CSRB approves all rules or policies impacting charter schools prior to State Board of Education (SBE) adoption.
- Securing CSRB authority to approve the written terms of charter agreements.
- Streamlining the local funding process by having CSRB, rather than the State Superintendent, create a standardized procedure for the transfer of local funding.
- Requiring the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to continue funding the financial data reporting platform LINQ for a charter school's initial year.
- Ensuring CSRB may hire its own legal counsel and oversee the head of the Office of Charter Schools.
- Clarifying that charter schools may use their own teacher evaluation tools.
- Ensuring that charter schools may relocate within 10 miles, inside their local district, without submitting a charter amendment.
- Codifying that charter schools have flexibility in whether or not to report class rank on students' high school transcripts.
- Requiring low performing and continually low performing charter schools to report improvement plans to CSRB, rather than SBE.
- Ensuring remote charter academies receive separate school performance grades from brick-and-mortar charter schools.
- Allowing a charter school with a remote academy enrolling at least 250 students to apply for CSRB approval of a separate charter, on an expedited basis.
- Working to secure Hurricane Helene relief funding for affected charter schools.
- Ensuring strong and sustained charter school oversight by securing legislative appointments to CSRB for two veteran charter leaders.
- Continuing to advocate for favorable budgetary provisions for charters.

North Carolina Lieutenant Governor Rachel Hunt joins Coalition lobbyist Harry Kaplan for a photo at the Coalition's most recent Summit.

OTHER ADVOCACY EFFORTS:

- Promoting broad stakeholder input and strategic improvements to the state's Ready to Open (RTO) process through outreach to CSRB.
- Ensuring the inclusion of charter school leaders on SBE's new accountability task force for public school units.
- Dispelling public misconceptions about charter school admissions through outreach to local school leaders.

"The Coalition has done an outstanding job. Their outreach efforts are tremendous. I know when I became a member of the General Assembly back in '21, members of the Coalition were the first ones to reach out to me and to educate me on what impact the charter schools are having on our communities."

*– **Rep. James Roberson** (D-Wake)*

"Oftentimes we don't get the facts. We get what the people want us to hear. When Coalition leaders come in, they tell us exactly what's going on, how it's going to better the kids. The way they advocate for that is exemplary."

*– **Rep. John Torbett** (R-Gaston)*

> “These events allow school leaders like me to connect policy to people, and it’s a reminder that relationships are really the key to any form of success in this education world.”
>
> – ***Melissa Blackwell,***
> *Superintendent, Neuse Charter School*

A sold-out crowd attends the Coalition’s fourth annual Advocacy Summit.

2026 CHARTER ADVOCACY SUMMIT

Record registration and school representation

The Coalition hosted the fourth annual Charter Advocacy Summit in Raleigh in March 2026, with our highest-ever levels of participation and school representation. Over 300 people registered for the 2026 Summit, including attendees, speakers, sponsors, and staff. In addition, more than 120 North Carolina charter schools were represented at this year's Summit, compared to 89 schools the year before.

Generous support from 40 corporate sponsors made the Summit possible.

The event launched with an evening welcome reception, providing Summit participants with a valuable networking opportunity. Coalition Executive Director Dave Machado and Coalition Board Chair Jonathan Bryant shared remarks welcoming attendees, while also recognizing state lawmakers and education leaders.

The next day, Summit sessions addressed the national education landscape; the Coalition's legislative and policy agenda; the current regulatory and legal environment for charter schools; voter polling data; Charter Schools Review Board trends; local funding challenges and opportunities; a new Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant award; and more.

North Carolina Lieutenant Governor Rachel Hunt provided remarks at the close of the Summit, affirming the importance of strong schools and the role of charter schools in providing educational choices for families.

Other Summit speakers and panelists included:

Hayley Sanon, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

Bruce Friend, Chair, North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB)

John Eldridge, Vice Chair, CSRB

Ashley Logue, Executive Director, Office of Charter Schools

Donald Bryson, CEO, John Locke Foundation; Publisher, Carolina Journal

Neal Inman, Chief of Staff for the Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives

Lisa Stifler, Chief of Staff for the Democratic Leader of the North Carolina Senate

State charter leaders, charter experts, and the Coalition's Government Relations Team also shared valuable expertise at the Summit.

> "No one model works for every child, and that's where charter schools have made such an important difference in North Carolina. Charter schools have brought innovation, flexibility, and new ways of reaching students who might not thrive in a traditional setting."
>
> *– North Carolina Lt. Governor Rachel Hunt*

Hayley Sanon presents opening remarks at the 2026 Summit.

The color guard team from Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy performs at the Summit.

Communications

Coalition communications efforts promoted charter legislative achievements and school successes, while keeping stakeholders, parents, and the public informed.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Promoting charter schools extensively in the media. The Coalition drove media coverage by distributing press releases, placing op-eds, pitching stories, and participating in media interviews.
- Garnering Coalition media mentions throughout 2025 in outlets or publications including:
  - WFAE
  - WUNC
  - CBS 17
  - WBTV
  - WAVY
  - Yahoo! News
  - EdNC
  - NC Newsline
  - News & Observer
  - North State Journal
  - Carolina Journal
  - and more.
- Publishing original Q&A interviews and articles on the Coalition blog featuring charter school leaders and other stakeholders.
- Sending over 100 email campaigns to charter school leaders through Coalition Connection and Charter Chatter newsletters. Connection newsletters provided member updates on SBE and CSRB actions, along with legislative summaries.
- Publishing a monthly parent newsletter, CharterBeat, to inform charter parents about policy debates impacting charters and build a parent advocate database.

> "When I receive the Coalition's communications or participate in a Coalition event, I can trust the information because of who it's coming from. It's contextualized already for how we operate as school leaders, and it's something I can understand for my own benefit, for our school board's benefit—as well as that of our community."
>
> – ***Glenn Byrum,*** *Executive Director, Mountain Island Charter School*

Education

Education initiatives emphasized equipping charter leaders with critical information and resources—and updating them about notable legislative and policy changes.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Offering regular updates during the legislative session to inform members about important developments at the North Carolina General Assembly.
- Providing members with policy templates developed by the Coalition's counsel to optimize statutory and regulatory compliance.
- Hosting webinars on teacher certification, NC College Connect, and charter legislation to inform members about issues impacting their success.
- Providing resources and a local networking opportunity for charter leaders through a Fall 2025 regional meeting at Sugar Creek Charter School in Charlotte.
- Hosting a Fall 2025 lunch for Ready to Open (RTO) charter leaders and Office of Charter Schools staff in Raleigh.
- Highlighting Coalition achievements and advocacy efforts at the September 2025 meeting of the Charter Schools Review Board.

"Knowing that there's an organization that never loses the North Star of advocating for charters is so important."

– ***Shannon Stein,*** *Superintendent, Lake Norman Charter School Member, Coalition Board of Directors*

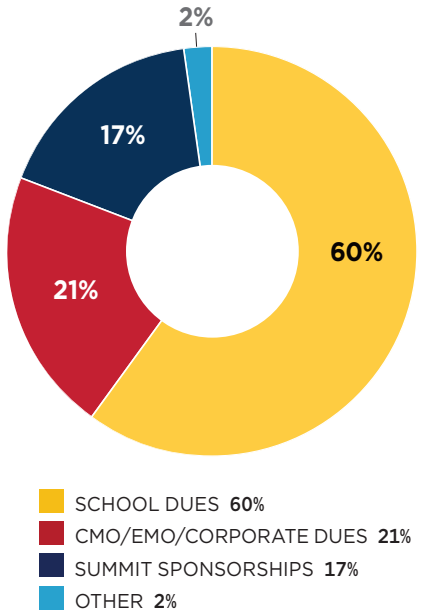
Dave Machado connects with Ready to Open (RTO) school leaders at the Coalition's lunch in Raleigh.

Finances

Financial reporting is based on the 2025 calendar year (January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025).

REVENUE

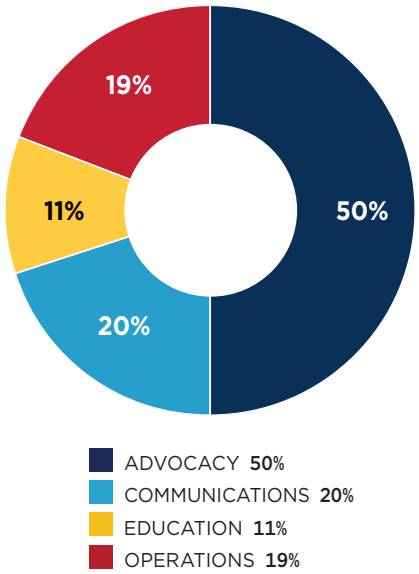
School dues	**$360,365**
CMO/EMO/Corporate dues	**122,390**
Summit sponsorships	**104,326**
Other revenues, contributions & donations	**11,590**
Total Revenue	**$598,671**



(CMO) Charter Management Organization
(EMO) Education Management Organization

EXPENSES

Advocacy	**$263,853**
Communications	**102,000**
Education	**58,918**
Operations	**99,926**
Total Expenses	**$524,697**



Advocacy spending targeted lobbying fees and expenses; legal fees; half of the executive director's salary; administrative personnel; and benefits.

Communications spending funded public relations and communications consultants.

Education expenses covered events, including planning and execution of the Advocacy Summit, webinars, and a regional meeting; advertising and promotion; website hosting and development; email marketing software; and printing.

Operations spending included half of the executive director's salary; benefits; board retreats; travel expenses; accounting and other software; office supplies; gifts and meals; subscriptions; and bank fees.

**For accounting purposes, the executive director's salary and benefits are divided between advocacy and operations categories because of that position's overlapping roles.*

> “The power that the legislative team has, and what they get done, is worth the membership for me.”
>
> – ***Shelly Shope,*** *CEO, Pinnacle Classical Academy*
> *Vice Chair, Coalition Board*
> *Member, Charter Schools Review Board*

> “The Coalition has become North Carolina’s leading charter school voice, through our focused and effective work advocating for charter schools with the state’s top decision makers.”
>
> – ***Dave Machado,*** *Executive Director, North Carolina Coalition for Charter Schools*

Member Schools

The Coalition celebrates diverse school membership, reflecting the breadth of North Carolina's charter movement. Some schools are independent while others partner with EMOs or CMOs. A number of member schools opened their doors in the early days of the state's charter movement, while others are just getting started.

We believe the diversity in Coalition membership is a testament to the unifying force of our non-partisan advocacy approach, focused on charter success and sustainability.

2025 IN NUMBERS

101 TOTAL COALITION MEMBER SCHOOLS

52 EMO/CMO SCHOOLS (10 EMOS/CMOS)

49 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

18 NEW MEMBERS

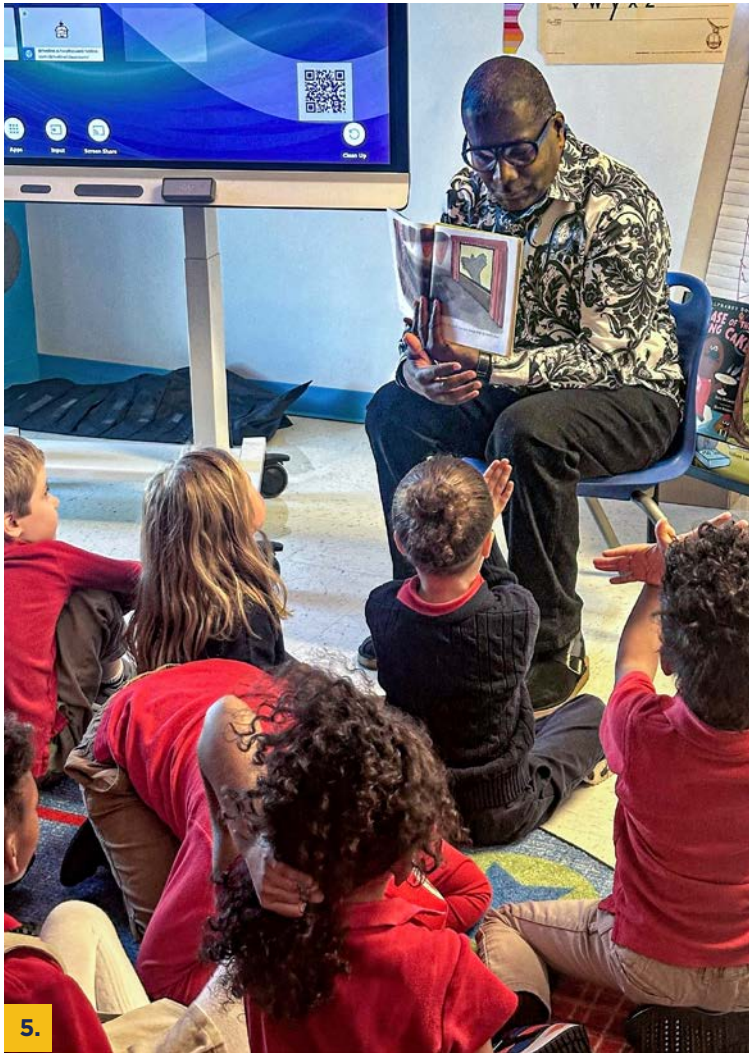
86k+ STUDENTS SERVED BY COALITION MEMBER SCHOOLS

74k+ STUDENTS ON 2024-25 CHARTER SCHOOL WAITLISTS

1. *Students at Lincoln Charter School participate in the school's annual Cultural Expo.*

2. *Rep. Cody Huneycutt (R-Stanly) joins Helen Nance at Gray Stone Day School's breakfast honoring military veterans.*

3. *Community School of Davidson students participate in the school's annual Sweet Fun Run.*



4. *Piedmont Community Charter School leaders attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony launching the Gastonia Police Department's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). The school has integrated its security system with the RTCC.*

5. *Rep. James Roberson reads to students while visiting Cardinal Charter Academy at Wendell Falls.*

6. *Pine Springs Preparatory Academy teachers work with local students during a trip to deliver resources to schools in Tanzania.*

Coalition Team

Leadership includes Dave Machado, the Coalition's executive director, and 13 directors who serve on the Coalition Board. Jonathan Bryant, the chief administrator at Lincoln Charter School, chairs the Coalition Board.

Advocacy efforts are led by lobbyists Harry Kaplan and Amanda Falkenbury of McGuireWoods Consulting as well as Dylan Reel and Story Oliver of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton. Matthew Tilley, a partner at Womble Bond Dickinson, serves as the Coalition's counsel.

Communications initiatives are led by Kristen Blair, the Coalition's communications director, and Pat Ryan, the founder of Ryan Public Relations.

Operations efforts are headed by Candy Weatherspoon, the Coalition's administrative coordinator.

** The executive director is the Coalition's only regular, full-time employee. The Coalition's lobbyists, legal counsel, communications director, public relations consultant, and administrative coordinator serve on a contractual basis.*

J.C. Huizenga (founder and chairman of National Heritage Academies), Megan DeKraker, and Dave Machado attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony for North Oak Charter School's new facility.

Dave Machado attends a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Socrates Academy's upper school along with school leaders Vanessa Baker and John Couchell.

Andrew Moceri and the Government Relations Team at the Summit.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Your partnership enables our success

One overarching theme has defined the past year for me: Partnership enables and expands our success. In fact, it is the reason I have worked so hard throughout 2025 to grow Coalition partnerships with both schools and businesses. I know the charter school movement's voice and impact become stronger as our partnerships diversify and grow.

I'm so pleased with how fruitful this work has been. Eighteen charter schools joined the Coalition as new members throughout 2025. Most were first timers, while others returned to our membership ranks. In addition, we continue to develop and expand our partnerships with companies that work with charter schools here in North Carolina. Take a look at the logos on our back cover! These companies supported the Coalition as Champion sponsors during our most recent Summit, or they signed on to partner with us as corporate members.

Like our member schools, these businesses embrace the Coalition's vision. They believe charter schools have earned a vital place in North Carolina's school choice landscape. They also believe charter schools need a strong defender in Raleigh in order to succeed.

What's next for the Coalition? We'll continue working to grow our partnerships and optimize charter success. The K-12 education marketplace has become more competitive than ever. Charter schools must pursue excellence consistently if they want to maintain trust from parents and the public—and hold or increase market share.

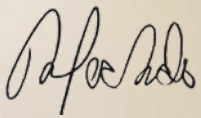
A big part of ensuring charter success, of course, includes our ongoing advocacy work to secure favorable funding for charter schools and safeguard their autonomy. We will not let up on either one of these goals in the months and years to come.

To our member schools, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude. We are so pleased to serve as your advocacy partner in Raleigh. To our corporate sponsors and members, I would add this: Your partnership undergirds and expands our work. Thank you, all.

If you are not yet a member, please consider joining the Coalition. In this report, we chronicle and celebrate another impactful year of charter advocacy. But we know there are challenges before us—on the legislative and policy fronts, and in elections, as we seek to ensure future lawmakers are also charter supporters.

Join with us in the year ahead! Let's partner together as we work to protect and promote public charter schools.

Gratefully,



DAVE MACHADO
Executive Director, North Carolina Coalition for Charter Schools

DAVE MACHADO

THANK YOU to our Coalition Champions and Corporate Members!

aetna
GoodLife communications
National Heritage Academies
ACCEL SCHOOLS
Mosley Construction
Charter One
Great Schools NC
2 Second Mile Education
CSP Charter Success Partners
Myers & Chapman est. 1953 Your Building Partner
CSUSA
HICAPS Construction Management
TMSA Public Charter Schools
Civic Builders
Performance Charter School Development
Polaris
Classical Charter Schools America
Hubrich Contracting Inc
Vogel Litigation | Investigations
Grow Schools
TCS Student Transport
Creovia
National Charter Schools Institute
Wilmot Modular Structures
Marsh
22 Beacon

"There's a unification of vision. The Coalition is able to draw different opinions together and try to cast a shared vision together as to how we propel charter schools here in North Carolina."

*– **Ben Zeigler,** Project Executive, HICAPS Construction Management*

North Carolina Coalition for Charter Schools

Learn more about the Coalition at

chartercoalition.org