



Education secretary disagrees with NAACP's charter school stance

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U.S. Education Secretary John King says arbitrary caps on high-quality charter schools are a mistake. [while appearing recently at the National Press Club.](#)

“We are fortunate, I think, as a country to have some high-performing charters that are doing a great job providing great opportunities to students — charters that are helping students not only perform at higher levels academically, but go on to college at much higher rates,” King said during a [recent appearance at the National Press Club.](#) “That’s good. We should have more schools like that, and I think any arbitrary cap on that growth of high-performing charters is a mistake in terms of our goal of trying to improve opportunity for all kids.”

This comes shortly after the [NAACP ratified its resolution calling for a moratorium on charter schools.](#) This decision caused a great deal of angst for charter school proponents and activists in black communities.

King’s support of charter schools is well known and the timing of his remarks adds yet another perspective to the ongoing conversation.

Nina Rees, president and chief executive officer of the [National Alliance for Public Charter Schools,](#) told Watchdog.org she commends King for speaking up on behalf of charter schools and the families who support them.

“Secretary King understands that charter public schools are an essential part of a strong public education system,” Rees said. “As a former charter school founder, leader, and teacher, Secretary King has seen firsthand the impact a charter school can have on a student’s life. He brings this experience to bear in his work as secretary of education, addressing the nuance inherent in both charter and district public schools, and refusing to label schools with broad brushstrokes.”

Rees says the success of charter schools is evident and caps or a moratorium on charter schools would only harm students. There are 6,800 charter schools currently providing millions of families across 43 states and Washington, D.C., with the option to choose a public school that best fits their needs, according to Rees. For some students in low-income communities, charter schools are helping achieve learning gains equivalent to 44 extra learning days in reading and 59 extra learning days in math in a single year, as compared to their district-school peers.

“We’re glad that Secretary King sees the role charter schools provide in creating a better future for individual students and our collective education system, and we’re glad he agrees that when a school isn’t working, it needs to be improved or closed,” said Rees.

“Arbitrary charter school caps will stop the growth of the best schools, ignore the catalog of research that charter schools help students succeed, and they ignore the overwhelming support of low-income parents and parents of color who would welcome having a charter school in their community — and who support the right of all parents to choose the best public school option for their child,” Rees continued. “The reality is that arbitrary caps will have the biggest impact on students stuck in failing districts, and the over 1 million student names on charter school waiting lists, who urgently want and need strong educational options.”

Neal McCluskey, director of the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom, told Watchdog.org he wished the education secretary offered more willingness to support school choice.

“I’m not surprised that the secretary spoke in favor of expansive charter schooling,” said McCluskey. “Much of his career has been spent in charter schools, and I suspect he sees value in semi-autonomous schools and parents having choice. I wish he’d champion full educational freedom by supporting private school choice programs, especially the D.C. voucher program, but he clearly values some choice.”