

## Charter Schools

### OVERVIEW

Forming and operating a public charter school comes with challenges, including the multiple state and federal laws and regulations that apply. We help our clients navigate through this unique process from the initial charter agreement and negotiation, to advising and drafting policies, to implementing policies and resolving disputes.

With over 20 years of experience and expertise representing charter schools, our attorneys not only advise our clients on legal challenges that arise, but also provide practical governance and operational advice to help facilitate the smooth operation of the school. In our work, we know that maintaining strong relationships with board members, staff, families, sponsors/authorizers, education service districts, and the Department of Education is critical to a charter school's success. We help our clients preserve relationships with those in the charter school community and empower them to make smart business decisions and deliver an exceptional educational experience.

#### Forming and Operating a Charter School

The innovative nature of charter schools requires us to deliver thoughtful, strategic guidance and technical assistance in all aspects of their creation and operations, including advising on charter applications, charter agreements, employment matters, policies, renewals, corporate formation, board governance, facility leasing, acquisition and financing, and generally all challenges that may face the school.

Our work with charter schools also involves regularly reviewing vendor contracts, negotiating charter management company agreements, and providing comprehensive governance training and workshops on non-profit board requirements. Our attorneys also specialize in public meetings, records, and contracting law.

#### Developing and Implementing Employment Policies

In supporting charter schools, as well as their staff, teachers, and board members, we help our clients draft and implement governance and employment practices and policies to ensure a sound learning environment. We routinely advise our clients on the following:

- Confidentiality
- Conflicts of interest
- Dismissals
- Drug and alcohol
- Electronic communications
- Employment agreements and policies
- Handbooks
- Hiring
- Record retention
- Reviews
- School policies development
- Whistleblower

We also provide guidance on insurance coverage, code violations, discipline and student relations, Section 504 and IDEA, student handbooks, and FERPA.

## **Maintaining and Expanding Facilities**

Recognizing that leasing or purchasing real estate can get complicated, we work with charter schools to remove obstacles by guiding them through real estate acquisitions, lease negotiations, facility development, construction, and zoning and land use issues.

## **Advocacy and Community Relations**

As strong advocates for excellence in public education, we have successfully argued for, and defended the rights of charter schools, before school districts, the board of education, the legislature, and in state circuit and appellate courts.

## **Resolving Disputes**

We represent our clients before administrative and judicial bodies and assist with dispute resolution on issues ranging from charter contract disputes, charter termination, employment disputes, student records, Section 504 matters, and other issues that arise during the course of charter school operations. Understanding the importance of saving our clients the cost and risk of litigation, our goal is to thoughtfully evaluate each dispute to determine the most effective approach to resolution and to minimize disruption to the day-to-day operations of charter schools.