



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 3, 2019

Minorities Want Charter Schools That Warren and Sanders Oppose

Even as some of the most “progressive” candidates for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination have said they want to eliminate charter schools, support for the schools from minority parents has increased.

Black and Latino parents have chanted “Our children, our choice,” outside Senator Elizabeth Warren’s speeches.

The lack of support for charter schools among top candidates for the 2020 Democratic nomination is “a reflection more broadly of the lack of respect for black voters in the party,” said Richard Buery, chief of policy at KIPP, the nation’s largest charter school network. “These are folks that should be champions of black children and allies of black educators.”



Charter schools, which are attended by more than three million students nationwide, are publicly funded. Therefore, like other public schools, they should be classified as “government schools.” However, there are differences in how they are managed that distinguish them from other publicly funded schools. They operate under a written contract with a school district, are privately managed, and their teachers are often not unionized. They operate under their own standards of conduct and have the ability to establish their own curriculum, outside the authority of the local public-school districts, giving them a certain degree of autonomy.

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Support for charter schools has come from people across the political spectrum. Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama both supported the concept — appealing to low-income parents of minority children who wanted alternatives to the poorly performing schools in their neighborhoods. Students attending such charter schools in large cities have tended to excel academically. These Democrats embraced the idea as an alternative to the taxpayer-funded vouchers for private-school tuition supported by Republicans.

Some conservatives have also supported them. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos believes that opening up the education market by means of school vouchers and the establishment of charter schools will offer parents increased choice, a position that critics oppose because they regard it as a step toward privatizing the American public-education system.

However, a new crop of politicians, including progressive/socialist Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), have vowed to work against charter-school growth if elected. These candidates are counting on support from the powerful national teachers’ unions, who are against charter schools because they usually hire non-union teachers.



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Instead of supporting charter schools, Warren and Sanders want to significantly increasing funding for public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods. They have embraced the position of the NAACP, which called in 2016 for a moratorium on new charter schools.

Josh Orton, a spokesman for Sanders, was quoted by the *New York Times* as saying that Sanders believes that “all students deserve a world-class public education, regardless of their ZIP code” adding that “too many charter schools are unaccountable and contributing to privatization.”

The *Times* also quoted Saloni Sharma, a spokeswoman for Warren’s campaign, who said that Warren “believes we should not put public dollars behind a further expansion of charters until they are subject to the same accountability requirements as public schools.”



Photo: AP Images

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.

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