

## Charter school backers seek funds

**JUSTIN MURPHY**

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Students, parents and teachers from 10 of Rochester's charter schools Tuesday called on Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the state Legislature to increase funding for charter schools in this year's budget.

Charter schools are privately run and publicly funded, but they do not have access to all the same funding streams as traditional public schools. Most significantly, those outside New York City get no money to buy, lease or renovate buildings.

The Northeast Charter Schools Network, which organized the rally, estimated charter schools in Rochester get 68 cents for every dollar that goes to traditional public schools. "Thousands of charter kids around the state and right here in Rochester deserve facilities support and equitable funding," NECSN Advocacy Manager Duncan Kirkwood said in a statement. "These are our children, and their education is worth just as much as every other child's."

NECSN also helped organize a lawsuit over the funding discrepancy in 2014; it is still progressing through the court system.

Charter school enrollment has swelled in Rochester over the last decade; about 4,600 city students attend one this year, as well as some students from the suburbs.

Each of those students comes with about \$12,000 in funding from her home district, leading to cries from charter opponents that the school districts are being drained of resources and talented students.

Charter schools generally post higher marks on standardized tests than the city schools but in doing so have faced accusations of financial and academic chicanery.

The rally was at Rochester Academy Charter School.

NECSN and other charter advocacy organizations are in direct competition with traditional schools for increased state funds; the Alliance for Quality Education, for instance, has asked the governor to increase education funding by \$2.9 billion.

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**Duncan Kirkwood is advocacy manager for the Northeast Charter Schools Network.**