**Arizona charter school capital funding increased 15% while districts declined by 85% between 2009 and 2017. It is not accidental.**

State legislator Eddie Farnsworth (R) owns the Benjamin Franklin chain of charter schools and his company, LBE Investments has built four beautiful campuses in the East Valley, and then leases them back to his schools. (see the report at [azcsa.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fazcsa.org%2F&h=ATOxB4E0WWFQuMgdceDznZjmeQ4llAGkRd6Xk62kuO03olm6YxxI8_FeMGC7kdvsOo1Rl_ki4UgBj2WotmObpCIRq9pJVYlOEvTubZXUviFR98SX5B2-SliQDv1c4O8GgOroBea8jNDonYYYnAHKjSZ0IwuKwbg&enc=AZMc5jOctZZ0pzCZM8V0-qAWatks0HNfVfwm8KUtvcqA1Z-nMlCsxt1iJmvE4kYxehfXpckyQk50ogH1TQdtdgm9bPanIED-AP9E4FY0m7X1tYuqZSsZUH7gyFjnQ8jSlnbYxx9iVUW0hXoFLfgBL5eQ8YJAed2G5MDiNuabtljUZL0b1Y0LVKdRPdF1XCCIoNsPB1YrqDUEf7aV1IVCM6SQ&s=1" \t "_blank)). Fancy brand new charter school buildings are sprouting up all across the valley.

Last year Glendale Elementary District had to close two elementary schools when the district found structural deficiencies that could pose safety risks for students and teachers. Glendale’s budget does not have sufficient funds for routine building maintenance, let alone money to make major repairs. There is no money for computers, textbooks, or buses either.

Arizona’s reduction in funding for capital expenses since 2009 has created a world of haves and have nots and public districts have ended up on the losing end - for the benefit of “school choice”.

The Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest filed a suit on behalf education groups, three districts and parents on May 1, 2017 over cuts of up to 2 billion dollars in capital funding for public districts since 2009. All public school districts, not just Glendale Elementary, are unable to afford major capital purchases like computers or buses - they do not have the funds to replace broken air conditioners or maintain school buses. You do not hear these complaints from Arizona’s charter schools.

The reason is simple: Beginning in 2009, the Arizona Legislature has cut district capital funding by 85% and has increased charter school additional assistance funds ,meant to cover the costs of capital purchases and facilities, by 15%. Representative Farnsworth and other charter owners are reaping the bonanza created by the Republican’s myopic fascination with school choice that is systematically destroying public education in Arizona.

Public districts received about $450/pupil in elementary and $490/pupil 9-12 for capital expenses in 2008. Today, districts receive about $60/pupil – a reduction of 85%. The additional assistance charter schools receive for capital purchases, on the other hand, has increase from $1474/pupil to $1700/pupil in K-8 and from $1718/pupil to $2000/pupil for 9-12 between 2008 and today, a 15% increase.

School districts must pass bond issues when they are unable to make major purchases and repairs, shifting the burden to local property owners. The measures are not always successful, so districts ask for in absolute minimum to get by. Fourteen districts in Maricopa County passed bond issues to make repairs last year.

Charter schools get the funds automatically and they get substantially more than districts receive. Charter additional assistance is supposed to pay for three things – transportation, capital expenditures, and facilities costs.

School districts are funded for transportation based on the route miles all buses make on their regular routes, excluding field trips. Charter schools get a set amount, $170/pupil when charter assistance was funded in 1999. Charters receive that funding for every student in the charter school, even if the school does not provide buses and transportation. On-line charter schools that have no campus still receive transportation funds. 184 charter schools spent nothing on transportation and 287 spent less than $100/pupil in 2015.

School districts in 2014-15 spent an average of $267/pupil on capital purchases, using state capitol funds, bond money and money taken from the M&O budget. District property owners provided an average of $1034/pupil to pay for bonds used to build facilities. That is $1100 - $700-$900 less than charter schools receive.

Factoring in transportation, charter owners receive enough in additional funding to not just maintain adequate facilities; they are able to purchase prime real estate and build elaborate schools – all owned by the charter holder. Over half of all charter schools spent more on administrative and facilities costs than in the classroom in 2016. The excessive charter additional assistance makes that possible.

It is often said that Governor Ducey and the Republican legislature are subtly trying to destroy public education with vouchers and low teacher pay. Eliminating the funding for public school capital expenses – not just the classroom necessities for a 21st century education like computers and textbooks, but basic safety items like replacing old buses and faulty air conditioners, while providing funding for brand new charter facilities, is not subtle.

The lawsuit asking the state to pay for computers and textbooks for students and basic safety repairs that have not been made the last 8 years is the first step. Examining charter funding and the way corporate charter schools are able to spend vast sums on management profits and real estate is the next step – one the Governor and legislature will not make in the quest for school choice in their war on public education.