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U.S. PUTTING \$253 MILLION INTO CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

DeVos spending on charters is slightly higher than last year under Obama

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The federal government is pumping \$253 million into the expansion and creation of charter schools, with hopes of helping students in low-income communities.

The U.S. Department of Education on Thursday announced Charter Schools Program grants. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos says the funding will provide students with more education options.

Nine state education agencies received about \$144.7 million, with the rest going to two state agencies, 17 nonprofit charter management organizations and six other nonprofit groups.

The money will be used in various ways, including for state-level grant competitions to replicate and expand charter schools and provide aid for planning, program design and launching of the schools. It also provides funding to charter management organizations on a competitive basis to enable them to replicate or expand high-quality charter schools.

New this year, some of the grant funding will target credit enhancement for charter schools to enable them to access nonfederal funds to acquire, construct and renovate facilities at a reasonable cost. Acquiring facilities is often a challenge for charter schools.

Last year, \$245 million went into the effort to expand and create charter schools.

"Charter schools are now part of the fabric of American education, and I look forward to seeing how we can continue to work with states to help ensure more students can learn in an environment that works for them," Mrs. DeVos said in a news release.

Charter schools are publicly funded but mostly privately run. In 2014-15, about 2.7 million students, or 5 percent of U.S. public-school students, were enrolled in nearly 7,000 charter schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

The state education agencies that received the awards are in Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas and Wisconsin.

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