*Welcome to LLA Reports, a podcast produced by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s office. This podcast is intended to be an oral representation of the written report it highlights and is primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature.*

This is Gina Brown. I’m a manager with LLA Performance Audit Services. This episode of LLA Reports focuses on our new report titled “Louisiana Charter School Compliance with Economically-Disadvantaged Enrollment Requirements.”

The purpose of this audit was to determine whether the state’s charter schools are achieving their required enrollment rate for economically-disadvantaged students.

Enforcing economically-disadvantaged enrollment rates is important because charter schools may have an incentive to minimize enrollment of these students in order to improve academic performance.

Overall, we found the number of charter schools meeting their required percentage has improved. However, some schools still are not meeting the requirement.

We found that between academic years 2016-2017 and 2021-2022, 27 of 123 charter schools – or 22 percent – did not meet their required enrollment percentage for economically-disadvantaged students for at least one year, and most failed to do so repeatedly.

At the same time, the percentage of charter schools meeting the requirement improved by 11 percentage points. In addition, schools authorized by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education – or BESE – had lower noncompliance rates than those authorized by local school boards.

BESE-authorized schools had an average noncompliance rate of 14.3 percent, while those authorized by local school boards had a noncompliance rate of 18.5 percent.

We found most charter schools did enroll a sufficient number of economically-disadvantaged students, but a relatively small group – most of which are high academic performers – had chronically low enrollment of economically-disadvantaged students.

Lower-rated schools were more likely to have higher rates of economically-disadvantaged student enrollment and higher rates of compliance with the requirement than A-rated schools.

We also found that even though state law requires most types of charter schools to enroll a certain percentage of economically-disadvantaged students, it does not provide specific guidance on how to enforce this requirement.

The primary mechanism authorizers have is whether to renew a charter school at the end of its charter term. However, the only requirement in state law explicitly given for renewal is that the charter school must demonstrate – using standardized test scores – improved student academic performance.

The Louisiana Department of Education – or LDE – and local school districts do have some enforcement tools for noncompliant schools, such as recommending shorter renewal periods, requiring corrective action plans, and setting incremental performance targets.

But these tools did not appear to have always been effective in bringing schools into compliance with their required economically-disadvantaged student enrollment percentage.

As a result of our audit, we developed two matters for legislative consideration.

We suggested the Legislature define how to enforce the economically-disadvantaged enrollment requirement. That could include making it a stronger consideration during a charter school’s renewal, or requiring charter schools to change their lottery so that economically-disadvantaged students are admitted until the school has met its requirement.

We also suggested the Legislature create provisions that give the state the ability to enforce the enrollment requirements for economically-disadvantaged students, especially for schools that have habitually failed to meet the requirements for a number of years.

*We hope you found this podcast informative, and that you’ll follow future episodes of LLA Reports.*

*This podcast was created as part of the audit report just discussed and is intended primarily for the use of the Louisiana Legislature. Both the full report and the podcast can be found on the LLA’s website at* [*www.lla.la.gov*](http://www.lla.la.gov)*.*

*Thank you for listening.*