

# VIRGINIA

## Where are the charter school deserts in Virginia?

We detail the distribution of schools in Virginia in order to provide educators and policymakers with information about communities that provide no access to charter schools. Many families lack the financial means to move out of neighborhoods when dissatisfied with their schooling options, so the location of schools is key to ensuring access and equity for all students. Policymakers and parents can use this information to better understand the supply of schooling options in their states and cities—and to press for changes that would improve that supply. Charter operators and authorizers may also find this analysis helpful as they consider where to establish new schools.

### What is a charter school desert?

The following maps display where elementary charter schools are located in Virginia. A **charter school desert** is three or more contiguous census tracts that have poverty rates greater than 20 percent but that have no charter schools.

### Results

Virginia has 1,347 public elementary schools, of which four are charter schools. The state as a whole has an 11.0 percent poverty rate. Virginia has nine charter school deserts, representing 22 percent of mid- to high-poverty census tracts,<sup>1</sup> located in the western and southern portions of the state, and in the southern, central, and northern portions of the Richmond metro area.

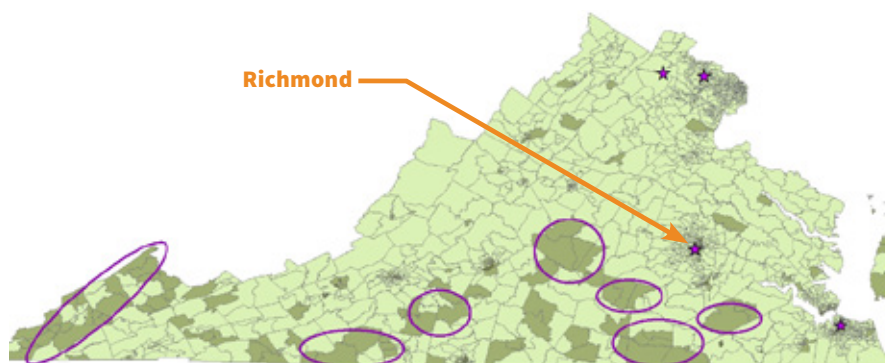
#### Virginia Charter School Deserts by the Numbers

% of the state population living in poverty.....	<b>11.0%</b>
# of public elementary schools.....	<b>1,347</b>
# of charter schools .....	<b>4</b>
# of census tracts .....	<b>1,907</b>
# of charter school deserts.....	<b>9</b>
Approximate proportion of mid- to high-poverty census tracts that charter school deserts comprise .....	<b>22%</b>

1. Meaning those census tracts in which more than 20 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty line.

Map 1 shows the census tracts and charter schools in Virginia. Darker green highlights indicate areas in which more than 20 percent of the population lives in poverty. The statewide map depicts seven charter school deserts in rural areas mostly concentrated in the southern part of the state;<sup>2</sup> the charter school deserts in the Richmond metro area appear in Map 2. There are two large ones covering most of the city.

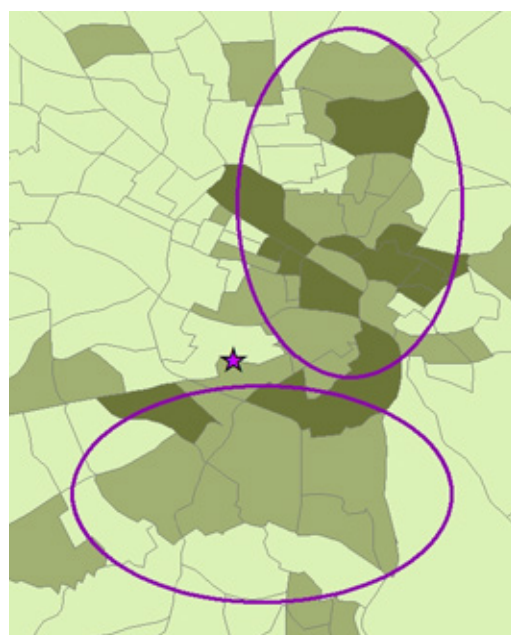
### Map 1: Overview of charter school deserts in Virginia



MAP LEGEND	
<b>Poverty Status*</b>	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#d9ead3;"></span>	0–20%
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#c4e1c4;"></span>	21–40%
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:#a6c9a6;"></span>	41–100%
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px solid purple;"></span>	★ = Charter School
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px solid purple;"></span>	○ = Charter School Desert

*\*Percentage of the population within each tract that lives at or below the poverty line.*

### Map 2: Charter school deserts in the Richmond metro area



### Five Things to Keep in Mind

Readers should note several points. First, we have not tried to describe, analyze, or infer how state policies may impact the distribution of charter schools in Virginia—simply to show which high-poverty areas lack such schools. Second, although we focus on school locations, location alone is insufficient to ensure that families have viable access to schools. Nearby schools may not be available to families if they’re filled to capacity, if policies prohibit transfer, or if transportation is unavailable. Third, some rural areas may lack charter schools simply because the population is too thin to support them. Fourth, our report does not address school quality, but the companion website allows users to view schools’ math and English language arts proficiency data. Finally, visually identifying charter school deserts is inevitably vulnerable to human error, as they may be identified differently based on how contiguous census tracts are positioned and how “desert circles” are drawn.

2. Due to the necessarily diminished scale on the state map, all charter school deserts do not appear on it, though they are included on the city metro maps.