



# MAINE

## Where are the charter school deserts in Maine?

We detail the distribution of schools in Maine 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 Maine. 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

Maine has 775 public elementary schools, of which only one is a charter school. The state as a whole has a 12.3 percent poverty rate. Maine has four charter school deserts, representing 19 percent of mid- to high-poverty census tracts,<sup>1</sup> located in the central and western areas of the state.

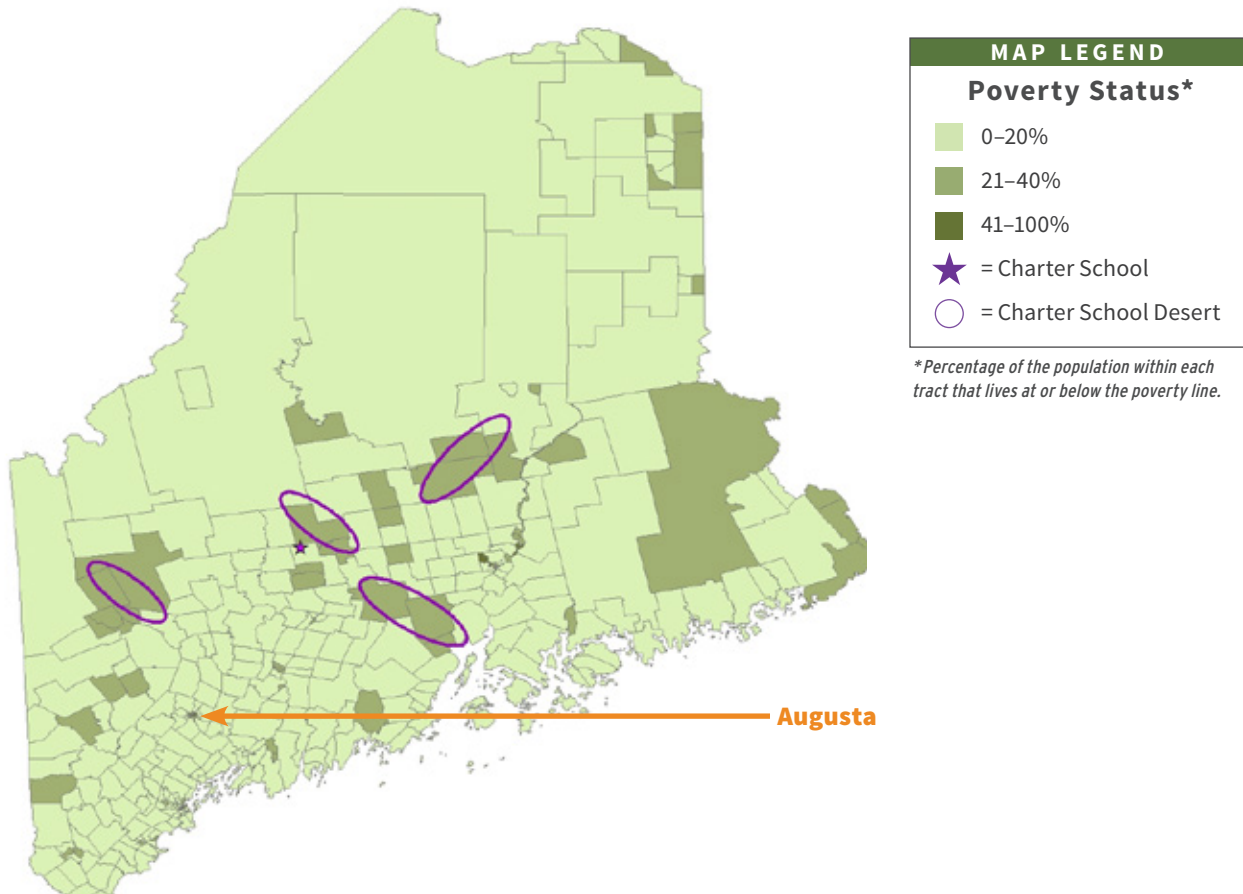
#### Maine Charter School Deserts by the Numbers

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| % of the state population living in poverty.....   | 12.3% |
| # of public elementary schools .....   | 775   |
| # of charter schools .....   | 1     |
| # of census tracts .....   | 358   |
| # of charter school deserts.....   | 4     |
| Approximate proportion of mid- to high-poverty census tracts<br>that charter school deserts comprise ..... | 19%   |

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 Maine, highlighting in darker green the areas in which more than 20 percent of the population lives in poverty. The statewide map depicts four charter school deserts in rural areas in the central and western parts of the state.

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



### 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 Maine—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.