TAKEAWAYS

Access issues are complicated, often localized, and difficult to solve in a way that makes all stakeholders happy. Thus, this report does not provide one "right" way of solving such issues, nor does it advocate for any particular solution. Instead, the report provides ideas, findings, and processes for authorizers and other leaders to consider when tackling such issues in their communities. These takeaways can guide others facing similar challenges:

- **Be a systems leader.** Access challenges impact schools and their students. That's why authorizers should play a key role in problem solving, even if doing so falls outside their traditional responsibilities. Authorizers can influence the context in which these issues play out by ensuring a quality sector—something that has benefited Washington, D.C. and Denver.
- **Get comfortable with trade-offs and compromises.** Tensions between competing priorities are part and parcel of nearly any solution to access challenges. Stakeholders in a given community may not always agree on the trade-offs or how to weigh them. But authorizers need to be aware of those trade-offs, as well the values they use to evaluate them.
- **Build strong relationships.** Positive relationships with other leaders, even those who may not support charters, are crucial to finding solutions to access challenges. Those relationships take time to build. Today, district and charter leaders in D.C. and Denver can easily pick up the phone and call one another, but that was not always the case.
- **Prioritize access to resources.** In nearly every city, charters lack access to critical resources such as facilities and transportation; this lack of access hinders their growth and financial sustainability and undercuts their efforts to serve all students. Student equity challenges almost always require cities to reallocate resources and organize for efficiencies within sectors.
- **Consider third parties as problem solvers.** It's no secret that building trust takes time, especially when there's a history of distrust. In both case studies, third parties played a key problem-solving role. Whether a philanthropic organization, community organization, nonprofit, or other important stakeholder, third parties can help build trust, apply pressure, and sometimes, actually take ownership for problem solving.
- **Get ahead.** Access issues are present from the day the city's first charter school opens. As enrollment grows, these issues become more acute. Problem solving should not wait. Education leaders, advocates, and funders should get ahead of these issues before they reach a breaking point, and there is no choice but to address them.