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Fax Cover Sheet

To: Mr. Charles Zogby

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From: Jeanne Allen

Date: 1/16/97

Pages (including cover): 3

Message:

- thought you'd appreciate this little tome. I understand you have a bill now - let me know what we can do.

Jeanne



PENNSYLVANIA
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION, INC.

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January 13, 1997

Jeanne Allen, President
The Center for Education Reform
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Jeanne:

I recently read with considerable interest your account of the charter school debate in Pennsylvania ("Here's a Tale that Belongs in a Fable"), which was contained in your November 1996 newsletter. I'm not sure who your source was for that account, but I thought I'd take the opportunity to play Paul Harvey and give you the rest of the story.

First, the definition of "lousy charter bill" is a matter of personal taste, so I won't argue about it. I should note, however, that the version of the legislation that had passed our state House of Representatives last year was hardly "lousy" from the perspective of local school directors. That bill achieved a notable balance in our opinion: it afforded considerable relief from mandates to charter schools while ensuring that school directors, who are elected by the public to be accountable for the expenditure of their tax dollars, were empowered to evaluate and act on charter applications.

Second, the version approved in November by the Senate Education Committee was significantly different than the one considered more than a year ago as part of Gov. Ridge's KIDS II school reform plan, which PSBA had generally supported. This latest version gave an appointed state appeals board de novo review authority and actually permitted only three of its seven members to overturn a decision of an elected school board. There were numerous other differences, as well.

Your characterization of "the BLOB" may resonate well with many of your readers, but it disingenuously ignores the carefully considered positions that our organization advanced on this issue. (Incidentally we did not "unite" with the union as you reported.) Simply because someone describes a proposal as a "strong" charter school bill does not warrant its passage. I would hope that you would take the time to familiarize yourself with the issues in dispute before you take someone's version of what happened and comment on them. We remain available to provide

Jeanne Allen
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you with our perspective on these matters. Feel free to call us
anytime.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Gentzel
Assistant Executive Director
for Governmental and Member Relations

TJG/gr