



WHY H 3010 IS BAD FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

Dear Senator:

You may be voting on H 3010 on Tuesday, a bill that amends the state's charter school law significantly. That bill does not help charters. In fact, we have repeatedly cautioned the leadership – based on our extensive knowledge and experience across the country in drafting, advocating for, and analyzing charter laws – that this bill will halt the growth of charter schools in the Palmetto State. If you care about making opportunities for reform available to children, you need to read why H 3010 is bad policy:

The South Carolina Charter School District creates more bureaucracy. The intention was to create another authorizer. Creating an additional authorizer to approve charters – along with school boards – is a good idea, and one that is practiced by more than 10 states that have the best and most charter schools. **But** this entity proposed for South Carolina would act as a local education agency, which means it would be responsible for administering all federal programs, a regulatory job that requires more government staff and resources to support it. These functions are already performed by local districts and the state education department. There is no reason to add another layer of bureaucracy.

Alternative authorizers in other states do the following: set standards for applications, approve applications, oversee charter schools for purposes of accountability and ensure continued growth and quality. They DO NOT regulate their compliance with federal, state or local programs. That job is one that is best left to existing structures.

- Funding for charter schools would fall to the state alone, which would do one of two things:
 - Take local funding away from charter schools, which means there would be an increased additional burden on all taxpayers to make up part of the difference *or*
 - Reduce funding for charter schools, because the state would not be able to appropriate enough money to cover the local share without a significant tax increase.

- Funding cut in half: Even with additional state resources, the bill cuts per-pupil funding almost in half, from approximately \$7,000 in a county like Charleston to \$3,500; from \$5,300 in Greenville to \$2,800.
- Fewer Charters, Not More: This removal of local funding and additional state burden would then cause the legislature to have to slow enrollment as a new appropriation each year for charter students would have to be considered carefully against other state obligations. There are three states that fund charters similarly – Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. In these states the legislature fixes the number of children the state may enroll so that funding increases do not occur.

The Center for Education Reform (CER) is the nation's leading authority for charter schools. Its' work has influenced the adoption of laws in nearly 40 states and more than 3,000 charter schools. Since 1995, CER has worked with education supporters in South Carolina to help ensure that quality education opportunities are available for all children. We supported legislators in their efforts to address constitutional issues raised by the 2000 State Supreme Court decision. We have also operated a parents network in the state for the last 15 months that disseminates information on education efforts and options in South Carolina.

We delivered alternative legislation to the Governor and the Senate Leadership in January of this year. Our language was widely embraced but later dismissed by one set of advocates in the charter community who have instead embraced what we fervently consider an ill-advised approach. There are good policy reasons why no other charter school advocates in the country have chosen the path that H 3010 leads down.

We want to make sure you know that there is NOT unity among charter school operators and advocates in South Carolina behind H 3010. Those that support the bill have not fairly represented the views of those who do not, most of whom are charter school operators from across the state who have not had a voice in the statehouse. Before you approve H 3010, we urge you to take the time to consider both sides of this issue. The future of charter schools in South Carolina is too important.

The Center for Education Reform (CER) creates opportunities for and challenges obstacles to better education for America's communities. Founded in 1993, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to foster positive and bold education reforms.

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