



May 22, 2015

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OEA Testifies in Support of Charter School Reform – Senate Bill 148

The Ohio Education Association (OEA) testified in support of Senate Bill 148 (R-Lehner/D-Sawyer) this week before the Ohio Senate Finance-Education Subcommittee. OEA believes SB 148 provides a comprehensive approach towards addressing what the Auditor of State has called “Ohio’s fragmented system of oversight” for charter schools.

OEA offered three principles that it believes should be part of comprehensive charter school reform: 1) accelerate the process for closing failing charter schools; 2) ensure that charter schools are subject to the same public records laws and financial transparency standards as any other public entity; and 3) fund charter schools in a way that doesn't penalize traditional public schools.

[To see a copy of the OEA testimony click here.](#)

SB 148 would make important progress on many, but not all, of the needed legislative fixes to the state’s broken charter school system. Important provisions include a stronger oversight and governance structure that is expected to limit the ability of poorly-rated charter schools to avoid or unduly delay closure. In addition, the bill includes stronger limitations on sponsor hopping, creates higher expectations for sponsors, and puts evaluation frameworks in place for both sponsors and operators.

OEA is calling for two additional reforms to be addressed in the bill:

- **OEA recommends that steps be taken to fund charter schools so students who choose to attend local public schools are not unfairly deprived of scarce resources. This can be done by having the state directly fund charter schools. We urge lawmakers to create a Charter School Joint Task Force to examine the ways in which the current burden on local school districts can be eased.** The current system of paying for students who choose to attend charter schools is unfair to too many school districts. Under the current “pass through” funding system, school districts are required to subsidize the difference between the full per-pupil charter school deduction (\$5,800 in 2014-15) and the lower per-pupil state aid a district actually receives. It’s estimated that



local school districts and taxpayers subsidized approximately \$250 million of the nearly \$1 billion cost of charter schools in the 2014-15 school year.

- **OEA supports the Auditor of State’s recommendation to allow ODE to match student funding ID numbers with a student’s identity to prevent charter schools from being paid more than once for the same student.** OEA shares the Auditor’s concerns about the school funding implications of the apparently growing problem of multiple statewide student identification numbers (SSIDs) being created to receive funding for the same student. “Charter schools are paid based on student attendance,” said OEA President Becky Higgins. “However, as noted by the Auditor, it has been demonstrated over the past several years, that the honor system for verifying student eligibility currently used in Ohio is open to abuse and needs to be fixed.”

[Click here to send a letter to your State Senator urging passage of SB 148, along with OEA’s additional reform recommendations.](#)