



ED, CharterRegs

From: Marc Freeman <freemanm@shikbraves.org>
Sent: Wednesday, September 22, 2021 9:24 PM
To: ED, CharterRegs
Subject: [External] Comment on Charter Schools

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Dear General Assembly,

First, I would like to thank all of you for your hard work over the past few years to address not only the pandemic, but numerous other issues impacting our Commonwealth. Like being a teacher, principal, superintendent, or school board member, being a legislator is a thankless job.

I am currently the principal of Shikellamy HS. We are located in Sunbury, PA in Northumberland County. Our school has 959 students and about 70 staff members. Over the last 30 to 40 years we have seen a massive economic decline in our community. This has had an impact on our school district. For the past several years we have had to raise school taxes and pull from our district fund balance. This past year we operated on a \$2 million dollar deficit. If this trend continues, our district will be bankrupt in 5 years. We have had to take drastic measures of cutting staff and school building budgets.

One of the main causes, outside of economic decline, has been district students who have chosen to attend outside cyber charter schools. Paying for cyber charter schools has cost the district in the 20-21 SY over 2 million dollars. Taxpayers in our district become extremely upset when they learn that their school taxes go to fund a school that does not even exist in their community. This system needs to change because it is bankrupting public schools.

I propose the following measures to address this problem...

1. If a public school offers their own cyber school, all district students who want an online education need to attend this cyber school or pay on their own for an outside cyber charter.
2. Cyber schools need to be forced to release attendance rates, graduation rates, standardized test scores and have them compared to public schools in the Future Ready Index.

Public schools are the backbone of our Commonwealth. They produce the majority of students that are the tax base and future of Pennsylvania. If we do not implement the changes above, public education will not survive the next 30 years. The General Assembly needs to not listen to the powerful Cyber Charter lobby, but listen to the parents and students of the public school system.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment. I hope you read and consider what was written here. Thank you for your service to our great state of Pennsylvania.

All the best,

Marc Freeman, Shikellamy HS Principal

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