



## ED, CharterRegs

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**From:** Abby Foster <noreply@citizenwindow.io>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 5, 2021 2:57 PM  
**To:** ED, CharterRegs  
**Subject:** [External] Opposition to Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools

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Dear Public Comment Pennsylvania Department of Education,

Dear Secretary Ortega and the Pennsylvania Department of Education:

As a future mother and someone who has spent their life providing support to family and friends in raising their children, I am submitting these comments in opposition to the proposed Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools.

There are few things in my life where I am provided no choice. The education of our children should not be one of those things and the majority of Pennsylvania cannot afford to send their children to private school if they do not agree with the curriculum taught at a public school or if their child needs a different environment to thrive.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is a taxpayer-funded agency whose stated mission is “to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens.” This proposed regulation does not support your agency’s mission and is harmful toward the 150,000-plus public charter school students, parents and educators in the state.

Charter schools work hard to ensure students have the tools to succeed. They conduct yearly audits and abide by the same reporting standards as district schools, but this regulation would increase the requirements for charter schools only.

This regulation is punitive toward charter schools and would burden them with additional challenges and requirements to maintain operations or grow to serve their student populations. For example, new schools or schools that wish to renew or expand would be required to go through an application process that lacks objective standards and a consistent process.

As you know, the authorizer charged with approving these ambiguous applications is the school district, when a majority of school districts have publicly opposed charter schools and are actively fighting to shut them down. This is essentially the status quo anti-charter process that’s been used for years, with no positive reform. Our students end up paying the price for these political games.

Meanwhile, there is no application requirement for district schools to open, renew or expand their campuses.

The pandemic made clear that families need more choices for education, not fewer. One size does not fit all was made clear when more than 22,000 students enrolled in charter schools last year.

Throughout the pandemic, charter schools have shared resources and collaborated within the educational community to ensure students have continuity of education and the tools for a quality education. They should be collaborated with as leaders in the education community, not targeted with overreaching regulations.

Any potential reforms to charter schools should be reviewed and voted on by the Legislature. At a minimum, give families and the charter school community more time to read and understand the impacts of this regulation to provide meaningful feedback. Thirty days is not enough. The comment period should be extended, and regulators should take the time to hear directly from Pennsylvania's families and students with statewide listening sessions.

Every child and parent in Pennsylvania deserves the right to choose the public education option best for them. We pay enough in taxes to deserve a choice. Please stop trying to "fix" what isn't broken.

Sincerely,

Abby Foster

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