



ED, CharterRegs

From: Michelle Fossum <noreply@citizenwindow.io>
Sent: Wednesday, October 6, 2021 11:22 AM
To: ED, CharterRegs
Subject: [External] Opposition to Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools

ATTENTION: This email message is from an external sender. Do not open links or attachments from unknown sources. To report suspicious email, forward the message as an attachment to CWOPA_SPAM@pa.gov.

Dear Secretary Ortega and the Pennsylvania Department of Education,

As a mother and educator, I am submitting these comments in opposition to the proposed Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools.

I also support the democratic process by which we are supposed to be governed. This proposed regulation is another version of Gov. Wolf's past proposals to disadvantage charter schools. All past attempts have failed to pass the Legislature. The Constitution provides for equitable treatment under the law, and the governor is circumventing the democratic process to regulate charter schools unilaterally without legislative oversight.

Reforms that improve public education and empower Pennsylvania students and parents both in district schools and public charter schools must involve the 253 members of the General Assembly who are directly entrusted by the voters to do this necessary work.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is a publicly 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 is the antithesis of that, actively working to hinder charter schools and reduce choice, competition and evolution in the public school system.

Not only will it move the operational goalposts for charter schools by making it harder for them to renew their applications, apply to create a new school or expand an existing school, it will create barriers for these public schools to receive their funding.

PDE disburses my taxes to the school districts who are responsible for accurately paying out the funds to each school in their district, including charter schools. Each year school districts on average keep 25% of the funds allocated per enrolled charter school student. Of the remaining 75%, there are more than 14,000 delays in payment to charter schools that are reported by charter schools to PDE.

This comes as little surprise because school districts are publicly opposed to charter schools and actively fighting to have them closed or their funding decreased. This is in spite of the fact that school districts and PDE have billions of dollars in reserve accounts.

The proposed regulation would minimally reduce the amount of funding redirection requests by charter schools to PDE, the governing body of the public education system. That high number of reported delays in payment demonstrates the system is broken and should be corrected rather than muzzling the public charter schools with added reporting burdens when requesting funds. This is government service and transparency at their worst. Each year, these schools waste time and resources chasing the funds the law allocates per each enrolled student.

Since taking office, Gov. Wolf has been proposing funding cuts and attempts to disadvantage charter schools, even during a pandemic when charter schools were some of the only operational schools!

Government should serve the taxpayers, not special interest groups. This is a dictatorial regulation that should be rescinded, and the governor and Department of Education should work through the Legislature on any proposed changes to our education system.

Sincerely,
Michelle Fossum
2104 Columbia Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15218, USA
mcfossum@gmail.com