



ED, CharterRegs

From: Victoria Kozhushchenko <noreply@citizenwindow.io>
Sent: Friday, October 8, 2021 12:48 PM
To: ED, CharterRegs
Subject: [External] Opposition to Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools

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Dear Secretary Ortega and the Pennsylvania Department of Education,

As a parent, I must first say: Every child and parent in Pennsylvania deserves the right to choose the public education option best for them. As a member of the public charter school community, I am writing in opposition to the proposed Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools.

The PA 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 constituents in the state.

The majority of Pennsylvania’s charter school families have chosen this education because their designated public school doesn't meet their needs for a variety of reasons, including a public school that is not achieving threshold educational outcomes, lack of resources, or their emotional/social or learning needs were simply not being met in the school district. Charter schools are serving a population that chose another option. I urge you to consider that with this regulation, students, parents & educators at charter schools in PA will continue to be treated as second-class citizens - and that treatment will get worse.

The charter school which my children attend, Souderton Charter School Collaborative (ranked the #1 Best Charter Elementary & Best Charter Middle School in PA, #4 Best Public Elementary School in PA, and #49 Best Public Elementary School in America, according to niche.com), works hard to ensure students have the tools to succeed. It conducts yearly audits and abides 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 school district is charged with approving these ambiguous applications, yet most school districts have publicly opposed charter schools and actively fight 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. More than 22,000 students enrolled in charter schools last year, seeking a different solution.

Throughout the pandemic, charter schools have shared resources and collaborated within the educational community to ensure students have continuity of, and the tools for, a quality education. Shouldn't ALL educators collaborate, instead of a small group being targeted with overreaching regulations?

Any potential reforms to charter schools should be reviewed and voted on by the Legislature. At a minimum, we need more time to read & understand the impacts of this regulation. The comment period should be extended beyond 30 days, and regulators should take the time to hear directly from PA's families and students.

I'd like to repeat this as I think it is the most important point of this entire message: EVERY CHILD and parent in PA deserves the right to choose the public education option best for them. Please think about the role you play in allowing them to do so- just as you likely would want your child, grandchild, niece, nephew or foster child to have access to the public education environment that best fits their needs.

Thank you for your consideration and please - keep ALL your constituents in mind. Politics has no place in this discussion or decision.

Sincerely,
Victoria Kozhushchenko
734 Bellingham Ln, Harleysville, PA 19438, USA
vlittler@gmail.com