



ED, CharterRegs

From: Nicole Jenkins <nikkijenks319@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 13, 2021 6:19 PM
To: ED, CharterRegs
Subject: [External] 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.

To the Division of Charter Schools:

I am writing to express my opposition to Regulation #6-349: Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools.

As a board member in the Freire Schools network, I am committed to ensuring that our charter schools are models of transparency, equity, quality, and accountability. While advancing these ideals may be the intent of these proposed regulations, the proposed regulations as they are written are cause for concern.

Specifically, the regulations around the charter application process takes a process that was intended to promote innovation and instead creates a burdensome "standard" application that far exceeds the requirements stated in the Charter School Law and then allows authorizers to request additional information from applicants at their discretion. Of course, charter applicants should be required to demonstrate their capacity to operate a school during the application process. But we have seen firsthand how the charter application process has become a bureaucratic task that is more about navigating ever increasing authorizer requirements than demonstrating the ability to provide a quality and equitable public school education to students. The only thing that will be standardized in these regulations is the undue burden on charter operators.

Demand for charter schools continues to far outpace the availability of seats in Pennsylvania charter schools. This expanded charter application and the continued ability of authorizers to add to the application will continue to stifle new charter development in the state and deny families their public school choice. And because applications form the basis for the school's written charter, each of the promises made in the new application form become a metric by which the charter school may be judged on renewal. The regulation leaves far too much open for school districts to include requirements that end up being anti-charter, which can become grounds for denial of new charters, renewals of existing charters, and expansion of charters.

These regulations seem to be designed to help the authorizers, not the charter schools and the parents who chose to enroll their children there. These regulations are not balanced and, therefore, should not be enacted.

We acknowledge that the Charter School Law needs to be updated. But the charter school sector – both schools and authorizers – would be best served by PDE and the Governor working with elected lawmakers to strengthen the Charter School Law and create policies that make sense for all schools and families. I request that you rescind this process and work to find a legislative solution to modernizing Pennsylvania's Charter School Law.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Nicole Jenkins
Secretary & Parent-Freire Charter School Board Member

