

**ED, CharterRegs**

From: Deborah Sabestinas <noreply@citizenwindow.io>
Sent: Friday, October 22, 2021 11:15 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,

Year after year, we have been fighting Gov. Wolf's attempts to defund our schools and make it harder for them to operate. This proposed regulation picks winners and losers in the public education system, and public charter school students lose the most.

I am opposed to the proposed Regulation #6-349 on charter and cyber charter schools for many reasons. Here are a few:

- 1.) Charter schools are required to submit an application each time they would like to renew, expand or open a school, but the regulation allows school districts to have subjective standards for the application content and their own justifications for approval or rejection. Instead of standards that promote quality and fairness, this regulation opens the door for districts to institute measures that hamper charter school growth.
- 2.) The regulation would require charter schools to use random selection for student enrollment. A school should be able to work with families to prioritize and enroll students with needs the school is best suited to meeting.
- 3.) Charter schools already follow the same reporting and auditing standards as district schools. The regulation proposes that public charter schools be required to comply with standards in addition to those required for public district schools.
- 4.) PDE disburses my taxes to the school districts, who are responsible for accurately paying out the funds to each school in their district, including public charter schools. On average, each year school districts keep 25% of the tax 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 annually. The proposed regulation aims to reduce those requests by making it harder to file a request, rather than addressing the problem with the payment system. This lack of transparency and efficiency is government service at its worst, and each year these public charter schools waste time and resources chasing funds the law allocates per each enrolled student in their schools. Identify and address the cause of recurring delayed payments, and fix the system.
- 5.) School staff and health care are good things. I understand the regulation seeks to make sure charter school teachers and employees can receive healthcare benefits and I appreciate that. However, my charter school won't ever receive the type of group insurance rates that the big schools and school districts provide. A different approach is necessary than the one laid out in this requirement.

The majority of Pennsylvania's charter school students are underserved. Whether it's a failing school, lack of resources or their emotional and learning needs were simply not being met in the school district, charter schools are serving a population that needed another option. You cannot treat these students, parents and educators as second-class citizens.

These proposed regulations should be rescinded, and any potential reforms to charter schools should be reviewed and voted on by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor. At a minimum, we need more time to read and understand the impacts of this regulation to comment. Thirty days is not enough. The people these proposals will impact

the most are charter school administrators, teachers, parents and students, folks who simply do not have the time and expertise that the government bureaucracy has to review and digest these proposals quickly. 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.

Sincerely,

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