

Charter School Expansion

Senate Bill 618 (S-1), as passed the senate, removes ALL caps, numbers, and limits on the expansion of ALL types of charter schools. Under current law, Michigan has 256 charter schools including 19 new ones this fall. ***Why expand a system that in the 2009 – 2010 school year had 50% of its schools' achievement rankings in the bottom quarter of all schools?***

Bill Highlights:

- Permits authorizers to allow charter schools to operate at ***more than one site under one board.***
- Exempts charter school property from ***real and personal property taxes.***
- Deletes ***geographical boundaries*** for community college authorized charter schools.
- Removes current ***150 cap*** on university authorized charter schools.
- Deletes the ***number and geographical limits*** for urban high school academies.
- Removes "Schools of Excellence" ***graduation rate and conversion stipulations.***
- Deletes requirement for a PSA or SOE to extend the ***collective bargaining agreement that applies to other similarly classified employees in the district.***

Issues/Concerns:

- SB 618 could create a ***state-wide school district*** by allowing multi-site schools under one charter contract, resulting in thousands of students with no local elected board or citizen oversight.
- Franchise-operated charter school management companies (79% of all charters) ***DO NOT reveal expenditures, budgets, etc.,*** as required of community-governed public schools.
- SB 618 ***removes the current incentive for charters to show academic success*** by eliminating the cap on university authorized charters.
- SB 618 ***undermines the community services and the school aid fund*** by allowing tax exemptions for property leased to charter schools.

- Removing the requirement that universities limit their 3% oversight activities fee will allow them to co-mingle funds and result in ***weakened charter school monitoring and oversight***, thus shifting the focus to making money for the university.
- Retaining current law requiring ***cyber schools reporting*** to the state superintendent and legislature regarding student participation and performance is critical to monitor this unproven educational model.
- Retaining current law to restrict additional charters to school districts that have a 75.5% graduation rate or lower ***targets expansion to areas of lower achievement***.
- Removing community college authorizing boundaries *dilutes local college board oversight* and ***is unnecessary*** with universities already having statewide authority.
- SB 618 deletes requirement for a PSA or SOE to extend the ***collective bargaining agreement that applies to other similarly classified employees in the district***.

bk:opeiu42aficio – 10/12/11

Cyber Charter Schools

Senate Bill 619 (S-1) seeks to expand enrollment in online learning opportunities for Michigan’s children without regard for past success or sustainability. We oppose its passage and urge legislators to look at ways of ensuring online learning for all Michigan students that has a track record of success and a real chance at making all career ready and college capable.

Bill Highlights:

- Removes the limit on the number of contracts that can be issued for cyber charter schools.
- Removes the requirements that cyber school students be previously enrolled in public school, and that a cyber school offer all of grades K-12.
- Removes any requirements including demonstrated success for entities to operate cyber schools.
- Removes enrollment limits on cyber contracts and removes incentives for cyber schools to seek out high school dropouts.

Issues/Concerns:

- Current cyber charter schools were established in 2009. ***There is not enough history or experience to demonstrate this pilot program warrants expansion.***
- An analysis of online programs made by the *I-News Network*, a Colorado-based in-depth news consortium, and the nonprofit *Education News Colorado*, **revealed that 50% of the students leave the program within one year and are further behind than when they started. The programs also produce 3 times as many dropouts as they graduate.**
- Cyber schools get a full foundation allowance with no oversight or accountability which puts Michigan's students at risk.
- ***SB 619 merely opens up the floodgates for inexperienced vendors to move into Michigan and make a profit.***

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Conversion Schools

Senate Bill 620 (S-4) allows a public school previously operated by a school district to be converted to a charter school called a "Conversion School".

Bill Highlights

- Allows 60% of parents or 51% of the parents plus 60% of the teachers at a school to petition their district to convert their school to a "Conversion School."
- To be eligible to become a "conversion school," the building must be on the "Lowest 5% Achievement List."
- The local district can convert the existing school, or another authorizer may create a "Conversion School" and lease building for \$1 per year.
- Local district may approve or deny the application. If denied the applicant may submit the application to another authorizer.
- If conversion school is authorized by school district, the employees at the school are school district employees, but not covered under the collective bargaining agreement.
- If the school is authorized by another entity, the employees are not employees of the school and not subject to the collective bargaining agreement.

Issues/Concerns:

- ***SB 620 is unnecessary as current law does not prohibit anyone from petitioning the local school board to convert a school to a charter.***
- The bill inhibits local control by stipulating timelines and staffing.
- ***There is no data that shows converting a school to a charter will result in more innovation or higher student achievement.***
- Creating more schools into separate charter school districts in an era of funding cuts and legislative service consolidation is counter intuitive and results in a more costly education system.
- The bill allows a “conversion school” to limit admission of pupils.
- What happens when a “conversion school” converts again?
- There is no data that shows taking away collective bargaining rights will raise student achievement.

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Dual Enrollment Expansion

Senate Bills 622(S-4), 623(S-4), 709(S-3), and 710(S-3) would broaden the current guidelines for dual enrollment participation by amending the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act and the Career and Technical Education Act.

Highlights of the bills:

- Expands the definition of "eligible student" to include nonpublic school and home-school students.
- Revises “eligible course” to mean a course offered by an eligible postsecondary institution for postsecondary credit that is not offered by the school district or state approved nonpublic school in which the eligible student is enrolled.
- Eliminates the 11th grade minimum requirement to participate in dual enrollment courses.

- Directs the State Treasurer to pay for course costs for nonpublic and home-schooled pupils.
- Allows each eligible student to enroll in 2 courses during each academic year in the first, second, and third academic years, and 4 courses during the fourth academic year.

Issues/Concerns:

- Student are allowed to enrolled in only ONE high school course - regardless of grade level - to be eligible for dual enrollment courses - *including middle school students*.
- Home-schooled students are no longer required to submit documentation to the State Treasurer demonstrating the pupil's educational program is being conducted at the high school level.
- Statute should also require postsecondary institutions award credit for any dual enrollment course for which a student successfully completes (receives credit). This is not current practice at several universities.
- Potential for increased drain on state revenues with home-schooled and private school pupils accessing higher education tuition free.

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Mandatory Schools of Choice

Senate Bill 624 REQUIRES school districts to enroll any Michigan K-12 school of choice student if there is capacity in that district. Current law ALLOWS districts to enroll schools of choice students from within its intermediate school district or a contiguous intermediate school district. Approximately 82% of Michigan local districts currently participate in schools of choice programming.

Highlights of the bills:

- Requires all school districts to enroll any Michigan K-12 pupil if it has capacity.
- Limits choice for special education pupils to within their intermediate school district unless the enrolling district has a written agreement with the pupil's district.

Issues/Concerns:

- Removes local districts decision making authority relative to participating in schools of choice programming and further erodes important local control.
- Taxation levels voted in support of the local student population (e.g. vocational mills, infrastructure mills or enhancement mills) could instead be used for support of students not local to the region.
- ***Special education students must obtain a written payment agreement if they are not residents of the local intermediate school district.***
- The bill does not define what constitutes a district's "capacity" to accept schools of choice students—thus not only leading to inconsistent application of this new mandate but potentially counterproductive outcomes.

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