



FACT SHEET

AB 1505 (O'Donnell, Bonta, McCarty & Smith) Charter School Authorization, Oversight, Appeals and Renewal

SUMMARY

This measure makes necessary and timely reforms to charter school authorization, oversight, appeals and renewals in the following ways:

Approval of Initial Charter School Petitions

- Allows charter authorizers to consider, when reviewing a petition for a new charter school, or a charter that is expanding sites or grade-levels, how the charter school would financially impact the community and the neighborhood schools.
- Allows a charter authorizer to deny a charter school when the district is in fiscal distress, as determined by the county superintendent of schools.

County & State Board Approved Charters

- Authorizes county-wide benefit charter schools.
- Eliminates state-wide benefit charter schools.
- Transitions the charter schools currently authorized by the State Board to have oversight by their local school district or county office of education.

Charter School Appeals

- Authorizes a full appeal to the county board of education.
- Establishes a limited appeal process to the State Board, which will hear appeals for a charter school that can show the district or county abused its discretion.

Charter School Teacher Credentials

- Clarifies that charter school teachers must have a state level background check and the required credential for their assignment, with a transition period.

Virtual Schools

- Establishes a 2 year moratorium on non-classroom based charter schools, with a

commitment to reform the sector in the next two years.

Charter School Renewals

- Requires charter authorizers to use the state accountability system as the basis for charter school renewal.
 - Authorizes charter renewals of 5-7 years for high performing charter schools.
 - Authorizes charter renewals for 5 years for middle performing charter schools.
 - Specifies that charter authorizers shall not renew low performing charter schools.
 - Requires charter authorizers to consider alternative data, approved by the State Board, for middle and low performing charters, during a transition period. If the authorizer makes specific written findings, then a low performing charter may be renewed for 2 years using alternative data.
- Allows charter authorizers to close a charter school for fiscal and governance concerns or if the charter school is not serving all student populations.
- Eliminates the requirement that academics be the highest priority during renewal and revocation.
- Requires that charter schools receive differentiated assistance and intervention for academic concerns on the same terms as school districts.

Data Collection

- Requires CDE to collect and monitor data on implementation of the bill, including patterns in authorization and appeals.



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PROBLEM

The Charter Schools Act has largely been untouched since it was enacted in 1992. School districts have been required to approve charter schools unless the charter petition fails to adequately address the required elements. This has led to unprecedented growth of charter schools in California. Today, charter schools outnumber school districts in this state.

School districts currently have limited options in regards to authorizing, renewing, and revoking charter schools. This bill will empower authorizers to consider how the charter school would impact the community and the neighborhood schools. This bill seeks to strengthen the ability of charter authorizers to hold charter schools accountable for academic and fiscal outcomes. Currently charter authorizers that have oversight responsibilities over schools outside their jurisdiction have unique challenges to providing proper oversight. Appropriate oversight is most effective when the authorizer is close to the school, and AB 1505 focuses authorizing and oversight at the school district and county office of education levels.

SOLUTION

It is time for a correction in state law to return charter school authorization and oversight to communities where the charter schools are located.

This measure ensures that charter schools are authorized and overseen by school districts and county offices of education, who are the elected officials that best understand the educational needs of their local students, thus improving proper oversight. Collaboration is critical to ensuring student success. Too many school districts have felt

that charter schools were administratively forced into their jurisdiction. When a charter school is approved within a community, there is far greater opportunity to share best practices as was the original intent of the charter school law. The bill gives school districts greater authority to choose which charter schools are approved in their community.

Further, this bill clarifies oversight responsibilities by requiring districts to consider the financial stability of the charter school during renewal. Most charter schools that close abruptly are in fiscal distress. AB 1505 permits consideration of charter school financial stability in the renewal process so that a school district can identify and respond to a problem before it becomes an emergency.

The bill updates the academic renewal criteria for charter schools and establishes the state accountability system as the basis for charter renewal. The renewal cycle for high performing charter schools may be extended to 7 years and middle performing charters will continue to have a 5 year renewal period. The bill further requires low performing charters to be non-renewed. If a charter authorizer makes specific written findings, then a low performing charter may be renewed for 2 years.

Lastly, the bill establishes a two year moratorium on non-classroom based charter schools, with a commitment to reform virtual schools during that time period.

STAFF CONTACT

Chelsea Kelley: (916) 319-2087
Chelsea.kelley@asm.ca.gov



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