

OPPOSE CHARTER SCHOOL REGULATIONS

The State Board of Education is considering proposed rules by the Christie Administration to scale back virtually all accountability on the state's public charter schools.

The proposed changes are regressive and fail to improve a public charter system in need of improvement. The Christie administration wants to create two sets of rules for two separate school systems. Every public school, including public charters, should be held to the same high standards.

Several changes in the proposed regulations include:

- Creation of a **pilot certification program for charter school teachers, principals and business administrators** suggests that the charter school operator can now certify employees based on a loose set of criteria, giving carte blanche to charter school operators to hire whomever they like, with very little regard to factors such as credential equivalency, meeting GPA requirements, or passing basic skills assessments or subject-matter knowledge assessments.
- Allowing **charter schools to analyze a public school district's assets**, including properties, and renovate or expand a vacant school using the host district's assets.
- Allowing charter schools to **create preschool programs**, whereas some public school districts, which have 40 percent or more students considered at risk, do not get funding for preschool programs.
- **Removing the limitations on home schooling instruction** provided by the charter school through lifting the requirement that students can be home-schooled only for reasons of illness or injury, thereby allowing students to be home-schooled for any reason.
- Allowing charter school students **to attend extracurricular and sports programs** at the host public school district at no cost to the charter school, which means that the host school picks up the costs and liabilities of the charter students.
- Creating single-purpose charter schools, which violate the spirit, if not the letter, of New Jersey's anti-discrimination laws, by allowing charter schools to have weighted lotteries.

The State should not "water down" professional licensing standards. These proposed changes alter the requirements for a legal and valid teaching certificate. This would create a system that does not have equivalency of credentials and—importantly—would prohibit portability.

At the same time, the NJDOE is insisting that new teachers need to pass edTPA, a high-stakes student teacher performance assessment. The NJDOE is proposing to create a pilot for charter schools that would eviscerate the high standards New Jersey requires to become a teacher. That pilot would allow charter school operators to substitute their judgment, and possibly their economic interests, when deciding who should be allowed to teach in their schools. Corporate charter school operators should not be allowed to degrade the standards New Jersey expects of its teachers simply because the governor believes they deserve lower standards.

The State Board of Education needs to hear from you. Attached is a form letter, which you can retype and send as-is, or use it to inspire your own words.

[date]

Dear State Board of Education;

It has recently come to my attention that the Department of Education has proposed changes to the New Jersey Charter School Program Act that I believe would damage my profession and harm our students.

I work at _____ [insert work site] and I believe that every day we do our absolute best to educate our students, despite the state's lack of school funding, increases in standardized testing, and _____ [insert a concern you have].

By creating a secondary teaching certification that would apply only to employment in a charter school that bypasses the traditional routes for certification, we are creating two classes of teachers - - those that have invested in the proper training and certifications, and, alternatively, those that charter operators simply deem "worthy" of their classrooms absent any other standards or qualifications required in other public schools.

There is no doubt that this is a "lesser certification." N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-11.12(a) clearly states that "all endorsements authorized in the section may be used only for employment in charter schools and do not satisfy the requirements for employment in traditional public schools." If that statement does not communicate that there will clearly be a lower bar set for these applicants, what does? If a parent chooses a charter school for their student, do they not deserve the right to have a properly certified teacher in their classroom?

The skills we use on a daily basis to educate our students were obtained through proper teacher training, higher education, and an ongoing commitment to a vocation we love. Our students deserve dedicated educators in whatever public school they choose.

Thank you,

[your name]
[contact information]

Addressing your letter to the State Board of Education

Submit written comments on the topic to be considered by the State Board of Education either on-line or by mailing them to the following address:

Diane Shoener, Director
New Jersey Department of Education
State Board Office
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-500

Effective letters are those which are individually written or typed rather than a form letter you simply sign.

- Be sure to mention your full name and position in the public schools.
- Identify the issue you're discussing and/or the code proposal at the beginning of your letter. State your position in your introductory paragraph. Be factual and support your position with information about how this will affect you as an educator and the students in your school.
- Be concise and straightforward. One page is sufficient.
- Offer to provide any additional information the board member might want or need. Provide contact information in case they wish to follow up.
- Remember to THANK the board member for considering your view.
- Proofread carefully!

State Board of Education

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