



## Senate Bill 14 “WV Public Charter Schools Act” Background A “Solution” in Search of a Problem

- West Virginia has been focused on providing flexibility at the local level. Innovation Zones have proven to be successful and just last year the legislature passed Innovation Districts. We need to give our education professionals and the communities they work with time to create the solutions locally and provide the resources needed to provide every child’s educational success.
- Community Schools are working to reach the needs of our children in families. There is no dispute that household income is the leading factor in student achievement. Community schools provide educational, medical, and social services to improve the lives of entire communities.
- Research has repeatedly found that the majority of charter schools perform on par, or even slightly worse, than comparable traditional schools. Only 17% of charter students perform better than traditional public school students, while 37% of charter students perform worse than students in traditional public schools.
- Some people claim charter schools are about providing choice. Most of the people clamoring for charter schools are people who look at public education and see dollar signs.

### Oversight and Accountability

- A recent nationwide report found \$100 million of waste, fraud, and abuse in charter schools.
- SB14 removes all local control and management from local boards of education.
- Despite giving management and operational autonomy to charter schools, the bill still holds local boards of education accountable for the charter school performance.
- The charter school bill provides for the establishment of a school governing board with complete autonomy. This board has no tax-payer oversight and is not elected.
- SB14 allows the governing board to contract with for-profit charter management firms for educational services and resources.
- SB14 opens the door to private corporations and makes it impossible to hold schools accountable.

### Education employees

- Many charter school advocates say they respect teachers’ rights, but for most of them, that seems to be just a talking point. SB14 will eliminate the rights of any education employee working in a charter school. School employees will lose all rights related to hiring and firing, grievances, 200-day contracts, length of school day, and evaluation criteria.
- Teachers and service personnel in charter schools **would become at-will employees without a contract** and without the ability to grieve any RIF, transfer, or termination.
- Recently a Maryland charter principal fired three social studies teachers in front of their students simply because the teachers had given notice they planned to leave the school over a curriculum dispute.

### Student Enrollment

- Charter school supporters claim that this bill would give students and parents the choice of which school a student attends. This is simply not true.
- Charter schools get to determine the minimum and maximum student enrollment. Students would be selected by a lottery in the case of more pupils than seats.

- Preferential enrollment treatment is given for the children of charter school governing board members and staff
- Charter schools are not required to provide transportation for students, putting children from rural or low socio-economic backgrounds at a disadvantage.

### **Special Needs Students**

- The charter school bill requires county boards of education to retain responsibility for special education students.
- Special needs students and low-performing or “problematic” students are often times “counseled out” after the enrollment period closes or just prior to mandated testing. This artificially boosts test scores and allows the charter schools to operate with more resources and fewer students.

### **Funding**

- Taxpayer funds will be taken from our already over-burdened public school system, which would still be educating the majority of WV’s children.
- SB14 allows for corporations and individuals to contribute funding to charter schools, creating an unequal education for children not accepted to a charter school.
- Provisions in SB14 would allow charter schools to receive funds from the WV School Building Authority, draining resources desperately needed for facilities improvements in counties with crumbling schools.
- Art, music, PE, extracurricular activities, tutoring and other supplemental and enrichment programs could be eliminated.
- Taxpayers would likely be paying taxes to support charter schools in other communities that their children are not selected or able to attend.
- In school systems like Detroit and Philadelphia, charter expansion has been pushed at the expense of the rest of the public school system. And it’s creating serious problems for school budgets. In Philadelphia, for example, each new seat added to a charter school leads to a net \$5600 loss in services for students in neighborhood schools, according to the Boston Consulting Group.
- Louisiana charter schools are being sued for not serving special education kids and for excessive suspensions and expulsions. Operators of some of the very worst schools in the state receive a taxpayer-funded salary of \$250,000.

**Charter schools will benefit only a select few students in our state. The majority of our students and school districts will see no benefit and will suffer as resources evaporate into corporate profits.**