

Presentation on Proposed Charter School Law Changes

**Testimony of the Maryland
Association of Boards of
Education (MABE)**

Maryland Education Ranking

- Maryland has been ranked for the past two years as the #1 education system in the country

Maryland Education Ranking

- Maryland's #1 ranking is based upon a system of accountability for student achievement that includes Students, Teachers, Administrators, Superintendents, Local Boards, State Board of Education, and State Superintendent

Maryland Charter Law Ranking

- Maryland's Charter School Law was ranked last in the country by the charter school experts that testified before the State Board at the last meeting
- Absent from their testimony was any data specific to charter schools in Maryland

Maryland Charter Law Ranking

- “There are as many opinions as there are experts”
-- Franklin D. Roosevelt
- The topic of Charter schools is no exception

Maryland Charter Law Ranking

- There appears to be a disconnect between the ranking of Maryland's Education System and its Charter School Law
- Current data regarding Maryland charter schools can resolve this disconnect

The Issues

- Issue: Charter Authorizers
- Issue: Collective Bargaining
- Issue: Facilities

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- The request for additional authorizers in addition to local Boards of Education presumes that local boards are hostile to charter schools resulting in fewer charter schools

Issue: Charter Authorizers

- Maryland's successful Race To The Top (RTTT) application documents that more than 40% of Maryland charter schools are conversions of existing public schools by local Boards of Education

Issue: Charter Authorizers

- Local boards have approved charter schools at a rate that exceeds all but 5 of the 10 states that are ranked as having the top charter school laws
- Last year Maryland's approval rate was exceeded by only two of the top ranked states

Issue: Charter Authorizers

- Maryland local Boards of Education take very seriously their role as charter school authorizers
- The State Board has never reversed a charter school denial on the merits of a local board decision

The Issues

- Issue: Collective Bargaining

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- Local bargaining units have worked successfully with charter school operators and local boards on various conditions of employment from hours to duties to provide needed flexibility

The Issues

- Issue: Facilities

Issue: Facilities

- Maryland public funds should not be used to construct or renovate schools not under the full ownership and control of public school systems
- Where practical, school systems have provided use of available space to their charter schools

MABE Collaboration

MABE appreciates:

- Opportunities provided by the State Board and MSDE Staff to work on the creation of the Model Charter School Policy and Resource Guide,
- MSDE cooperation with the MABE Charter School Commission, and
- The invitation to testify today

Additional Questions Posed

- How do you see charter schools advancing the excellence of public school education in your county/the State?

Response

- Charter schools and other schools of choice (IB, STEM, Fine Arts, CTE, etc.) are providing opportunities for increased parental choice among innovative educational programs
- Local boards are held accountable to ensure that all schools of choice are advancing excellence

Additional Questions Posed

- When you are reviewing an application for a charter school, what causes you to look favorably or unfavorably on an application?

Response

- Maryland school systems have policies and criteria to evaluate charter school applications for academic and financial viability
- Local school systems typically spend untold hours supporting and assisting charter school applicants to encourage success

Additional Questions Posed

- How can we have a sustainable charter school program, one that coexists with the existing school system and strengthens the quality of public education provided to all students?

Response

- Maryland's accountability system under the stewardship of local boards of education ensures the quality of public education for all students
- Maryland's charter school law is working to ensure that charter schools succeed as schools of choice within our accountability system

Maryland Charter Headlines

- Maryland charter schools on the rise
- Can KIPP's success be replicated?
- First glimpse of the SEED School
- Nine more "transformation schools" approved
- Baltimore where every week is charter schools week
- Imagine Discovery to open tomorrow
- Baltimore Freedom Academy among the nation's Best High Schools [All from actual headlines]

National Charter Headlines

- Report: Most Minnesota Charter Schools mismanage finances (1) [Number shows Charter Law ranking]
- A Costly DC Charter School Failure (2)
- LA Charter Schools: A Civil Rights Failure? (3)
- More than 40 percent of start-up charter schools in Georgia operate in the red (4)
- Problems with Colorado's Virtual Charter Schools (5)
- Utah Charter Schools need better oversight (7)
- New York KIPP schools fight over unionizing (8)
- Arizona's Charter Schools are an abysmal failure (10)

MABE's Conclusion

- Maryland's Charter School Law is based upon the same system of accountability that led to the #1 state education ranking
- That same focus on student achievement makes the current Maryland Charter School Law a model for the nation