



Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

TO: Members of the Maryland State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: October 26, 2010
SUBJECT: Charter School Program Review

PURPOSE:

To continue the State Board of Education's efforts to expand the Board's understanding of the operation of charter schools under present State statute and to identify opportunities to strengthen Maryland's Charter School Program.

BACKGROUND:

In June, the State Board approved a Charter School Policy which was prepared to provide greater clarity of Maryland's Charter School Law. During the discussion of that Policy, questions were raised regarding the need to suggest amendments to improve the functioning of the law. At that time, it was agreed that the Board did not have sufficient knowledge of the operation of the Maryland Charter School Program to determine whether or not it was appropriate and/or necessary for the State Board to suggest amendments to the current Charter School Law. It was further agreed that the Board would conduct a review of the charter schools using a process similar to that followed by the Board in examining and reviewing the operation of Alternative Teacher Education Programs. The review would take place over several meetings of the State Board and include panel presentations by representatives of charter schools as well as representatives of local boards of educations and school systems.

The review began at the August Board meeting with a presentation by Department staff which included both State and national data on charter schools and an overview of Maryland's Federal Charter School Program Grant. At last month's meeting the Board heard presentations by representatives of three charter school operators in Maryland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Board asked that it be provided with a national perspective on charter schools at its October 2010 meeting. Consistent with that request, the Board will be addressed today by representatives of three leading national charter school advocacy groups: the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools, the Center for Educational Reform, and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

Todd Ziebarth is the vice president for state advocacy and support for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Previously, he worked as a policy analyst both at the Education Commission of the States from 1997 to 2003 and at Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates from 2003 to 2005. He has a Bachelor's of Business Administration from Western Michigan University, a Master's of Public Administration from the University of Colorado at Denver and a Master's of Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Colorado at Denver.

Jeanne Allen is the Founder and President of The Center for Education Reform (CER), a national advocacy organization based in the Washington, DC metropolitan area dedicated to creating better educational opportunities for children and families. As one of the nation's leading experts on education, Jeanne appears frequently quoted in newspapers and on television, discussing choice and accountability in American education - two most essential tenets of successful schooling. She serves as Trustee to former Secretary of State Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance, is an advisor to the Best Friends Foundation, and is a member of the Digital Learning Council - a distinguished national group dedicated to closing the educational achievement gap by advancing world-class technological innovations in schools. She is a public servant and servant leader. To that end, Jeanne Allen is a candidate for Delegate in Maryland's 16th District and will stand for election this November.

Alex Medler is the Vice President of Policy and Research for the National Association of Charter Schools Authorizers, based in Chicago. He served on NACSA's Board of Directors from 2007 to 2009. Alex has been a national expert on charter school policy since the opening days of the movement, analyzing the first laws in 1992. He is a founding board member and current board chair of the Colorado Charter School Institute and received an Expert Appointment to the U.S. Department of Education in 1997. Alex earned his Ph.D. (political science) from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a B.A. (politics) from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement. Its goal is to increase the number of high-quality charter schools available to all families, particularly in disadvantaged communities that lack access to quality public schools. The Alliance provides assistance to state charter school associations and resource centers, develops and advocates for improved public policies, and serves as the united voice for this large and diverse movement. The Alliance supports policies promoting charter schools as a high-quality public education option.

The Alliance focuses on key priorities like lifting arbitrary "caps" on charter growth and closing the funding gap between charters and other public schools. Alliance policy experts work directly with state level charter support organizations to encourage these charter-friendly policies and help state charter associations win changes in law. <http://www.publiccharters.org>

The Center for Education Reform strives to drive the creation of better educational opportunities for all children by leading parents, policymakers and the media in boldly advocating for school choice, advancing the charter school movement, and challenging the education establishment. Through its storehouse of data and unique insights into American communities, CER uses information to turn parents into activists, policymakers into advocates, and educators into reform leaders. The Center for Education Reform strives to change laws, minds and cultures to allow good schools to flourish. The Center for Education Reform is a 501c(3) public, non-profit corporation organized in the District of Columbia in 1993. Support for CER comes from more than 1,000 individuals, foundations, and civic leaders. <http://www.edreform.com>

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers is unique in the charter school movement. It is devoted exclusively to improving public education by improving the policies and practices of the organizations responsible for authorizing charter schools. Quality authorizing leads to quality charter schools, and NACSA is creating the environment of expectations, relationships, practices, policy, and resources for authorizers to excel. NACSA works with local experts to create the conditions needed for quality schools to thrive. We push for high standards for authorizers and help to define successful authorizer practices. NACSA believes that genuine reform through charter schools occurs through the balanced interplay of three principles: choice, autonomy, and accountability. Good authorizers maintain high standards for themselves and their schools, preserve the autonomy of the schools they charter, and protect the interests of students and the communities they serve. <http://www.qualitycharters.org/>

ACTION:

For information only, no action is required.