



Ann Arbor Public Schools

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Education Committee, Michigan House of Representatives

From: Patricia Pataky Green, Ph.D.  
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Date: November 2, 2011

Subject: Testimony Regarding Senate Bill 0618

I understand that there are several bills currently under consideration, but it is Senate Bill 0618 that needs very close scrutiny. Research is clear that charter schools do not perform, on average, as well as public schools and in the Citizens Research Council (September 2010) it was stated that at the national level only 17% of the charter schools outperform traditional public schools and 37% actually perform worse than traditional public schools. Those remaining, 46%, are not performing better than traditional public schools. These are important statistics to keep in mind regarding this pending legislation.

By increasing the number of charter schools, it adds to the public funding burden for public education that is already stretched so thinly with the enormous budget reductions in recent years, especially last year. By increasing the number of charters, it diminishes the public funding available to the traditional public schools and increases the financial hardships that are being experienced in the Michigan public education sector. The fact that charter schools have not proven themselves to be more effective than traditional public schools must be kept in mind when decisions are made regarding their potential expansion. Student achievement outcomes do not show better performance in charter schools and it seems reckless to use funding for charter schools that would have been targeted for traditional public schools in an economy where effectiveness must be measured carefully with strong accountability measures in place. Charter schools are not held to the same accountability standard as traditional public schools and this is another consideration for not authorizing the expansion of charters in Michigan.

Local public school districts have received communiqués from the Department of Education and the State Board of Education regarding increasing the *rigor* in accountability measures such as the MEAP assessments by raising the “cut scores” beginning with this fall’s testing program. *Rigor* is an important accountability message that we are all embracing. The State Legislature also added *rigor* in the tenure reform legislation with numerous requirements on local school districts that will impact funding capabilities in order to enforce these new laws appropriately, yet there are no additional funding streams to support either of these new requirements. However, local school districts acknowledge the necessity to add *rigor*, but also ask that consistency be applied to actions being taken regarding legislation in the education arena.

Expanding charter schools at this time of financial hardship is not in the best interest of taxpayers and children in the State of Michigan and I urge you to defeat this charter school legislation. Our children’s future is at stake.