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## Education Reform Legislation Will Strengthen Charter School Accountability, Oversight and Transparency

Lifting the cap will help attract more high performing charter operators

Lansing, Mich. — Michigan's charter public school authorizers are accountable and provide effective oversight. Pending education reform legislation to lift the cap on university-chartered public schools will only strengthen their ability to authorize high quality charter schools and provide more education options for Michigan's school children to succeed.

The Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers (The Council) supports SB 618, which includes 61 new provisions to increase accountability, oversight and transparency of charter schools and authorizers. In addition, under SB 618, Michigan will no longer be the only state that has both reached its legislative cap on charter schools and prohibits a board from operating multiple school sites. According to the Council, the cap was the biggest barrier for Michigan to provide more education choices for parents.

"Michigan has a number of high quality charter school operators but SB 618 will enable Michigan to compete and recruit even more high quality operators," said Billie Kops Wimmer, Executive Director of The Council. "Removing the single site restriction in SB 618 will also help Michigan attract nationally touted operators that have established growth plans that call for the development of multiple school sites," added Wimmer.

Among the 61 new provisions in SB 618 to address accountability, oversight and transparency for charter schools, management companies and authorizers, one provision regarding the authorizer's decision to renew a charter school contract, has received very little attention.

"We are proud that our charter school authorizer members are currently providing innovative programs, strong curricula and new tools to measure academic growth," said Wimmer. "This legislation mandates for the first time in state law, that improved academic performance for all student groups is the most important factor in the authorizer's decision to renew any charter," said Wimmer. "This language should go a long way to ensure that poor quality schools won't be renewed. Poor quality charters have been closing and poor quality management companies are leaving the state."

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Michigan’s statewide charter school authorizers use processes to address failing schools, including changing the entire board, removing school leaders, and instituting other internal changes and controls. These schools are put on short probation until change occurs or closure. Since 1994, 56 public school academies have been closed for poor performance while the Michigan Department of Education hasn’t closed a single school for chronic failure.

Despite the fact that charter public school students are nearly twice as likely to be at-risk than the statewide average, they consistently outperform demographically similar traditional public school students on every MEAP test. In fact, continuously enrolled students at CMU charter schools (the state’s largest authorizer) actually meet or exceed the statewide average proficiency for Math and Reading.

According to newly released data on the 2010 MEAP reading test, continuously enrolled students at CMU charter schools out perform their peers statewide and in Michigan’s four largest cities. CMU charter schools are primarily based in urban cities. Looking at the 2010 MEAP math test, continuously enrolled CMU charter school students meet the statewide average and exceed their peers in urban areas.

2010 MEAP Achievement in Reading  
by number of yrs. enrolled in CMU charters.

CMU:	83.6 %
Statewide:	83.4%
Lansing:	70.5%
Grand Rapids:	65.4%
Detroit:	62.1 %
Flint:	62.0%

2010 MEAP Achievement in Math  
By number of yrs. enrolled in CMU  
charters.

CMU:	85.5%
Statewide:	85.5%
Lansing:	72.1%
Grand Rapids:	68.8%
Flint:	68.7%
Detroit:	65.0%

“Some organizations contend that they support charter schools, competition and options for parents but are attempting to derail choice options by adding excessive burdens and unrealistic standards to SB 618,” said Wimmer. “They ignore the fact that charter public schools already comply with every state and federal rule and regulation as traditional public schools, as well as additional requirements from their authorizer.”

The majority of charter public schools have waiting lists while Michigan has been at the legislative cap of 150 university-authorized charters since 1999.

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