

ACTION NEEDED NOW

Contact your House member by Tuesday, February 15 (see contact information and sample message below) and strongly urge him/her to vote against the charter school bill AS passed by the House Education and Public Works Committee ([H.3241](#)).

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The House is expected to take up the bill revising several provisions in the state's charter school law sometime during the week of February 14. As passed by the education committee, the bill includes some positive changes but creates several provisions that will drain already scarce resources for schools.

Provisions SCSBA supports:

- increased time for the charter school application process
- enrollment priority given to students who reside within the former attendance area of a converted school;
- the inclusion of provisions for single gender charter schools
- an appropriate payment timeline for charters with approved incremental and expansion plans.

Provisions SCSBA opposes:

- Mandating that school districts send all local funds quarterly to the state charter school district for students who reside in their district and attend a **state-sponsored** brick-and-mortar charter school (reduced to 75 percent of local funds for students attending state virtual charter schools).
- Deleting of a provision allowing district sponsors to retain a percentage (2% was in the original bill) of total state and local appropriations per charter school for oversight expenses.
- Mandating that districts allow conversion charter schools (traditional schools that convert to charter schools) to remain in their school building and use resources, equipment and supplies free of charge for the life of the charter.
- Lowering of the vote requirement from parents for a traditional public school to convert to a charter school.
- Mandating that districts allow charter school students to participate in extracurricular activities at their resident traditional public school if the activities are not available at their charter school.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- If you have provided SCSBA (ssluder@scsba.org) with your home street address, you will find a link to your representative at the bottom of this email.
- If your representative is incorrect, please notify Stephanie Sluder at ssluder@scsba.org
- You can look up your representative's contact information by clicking on the "By Name" link under "State House" on our Elected Officials Web page at http://www.scsba.org/advocacy_electedoff.htm
- Don't know your representative? Find him/her from our Elected Officials Web page by clicking on the "District Lookup" link under "Other". Type in your home street address, city and zip code and follow the prompts.

SAMPLE MESSAGE

The following is a sample message for you to consider using as is or modified to fit your district's situation. Please note areas in the message highlighted in yellow that require you to insert your district's information. To assist, [click here](#) for a spreadsheet (pdf file) showing the estimated loss in local funds by school districts. If your district is not affected, then please revise the sentence(s) and use the statewide loss figure of \$20.6 million. Please note that the document, which is from the State Department of Education, uses the term "shift" in local funding. SCSBA believes the more accurate term is "loss" or "new cost" to local school districts.

Dear Representative name:

As a **superintendent, board member, public school advocate, etc.** in **name of district**, I wish to express my strong opposition to several provisions in the charter school bill (H.3241) and strongly urge you to support amending those provisions or oppose its passage. While this bill offers several beneficial administrative and technical provisions, including increased charter school application timelines and single-gender charter schools, in its current form it would adversely affect the students, teachers and taxpayers in our school district in the following ways:

1. Creates a new cost to local taxpayers for a state expense

As passed by the House Education and Public Works Committee, H.3241 requires districts to provide local funds for students residing in our district who attend state charter schools (100% for students in brick and mortar schools and 75% for students in virtual schools). This would mean an estimated \$ **insert your district's amount** cost to our district based on the State Department of Education's own figures. This would also mean a loss of revenue because our cost for operating our schools will not decrease. Finally this cut would come on top of the more than \$ **insert your district amount** our schools have had to sustain over the past two years and when we are facing further cuts next year.

2. Lack of taxpayer accountability

In addition to the loss of already scarce dollars, mandating districts to use locally generated funds to pay for a district created by the state, especially on a per-pupil basis, is deceptive for the following reasons:

- The amount of local funds generated in each district is not based on the number of students in the district (per pupil basis). Local funding is used to implement programs and/or services that local communities desire that the state does not fund such as foreign language classes in elementary schools, magnet schools, tutors, etc. Local funding is also used to supplement shortfalls in state funding to pay for non-student, state-mandated expenses such as employee benefits, teacher salary step increases, etc.
- Local funds are raised through the levy of property taxes by elected school boards who are held accountable for those funds. State-sponsored charter schools are not local schools.

Finally, with no caps on the number of students who can attend a state charter school, including current private school and home school students, it will make it nearly impossible for districts to annually budget revenues.

3. Reduces opportunities for students and creates inequities

H.3241 mandates that districts allow charter school students to participate in extracurricular activities at their resident traditional public school basically free of charge. Clearly this diminishes funding and capacity available to the students who attend the traditional public school.

4. Other

- Deleting of a provision allowing district sponsors to retain a percentage (2% was in the original bill) of total state and local appropriations per charter school for oversight expenses.
- Mandating districts allow conversion charter schools (traditional schools that convert to charter schools) to remain in their school building and use resources, equipment and supplies free of charge for the life of the charter.
- Lowering of the vote requirement from parents for a traditional public school to convert to a charter school.

At a time of unprecedented cuts, this bill in its present form is not supportive or fair to traditional public schools and, further, will cost local taxpayers at least \$20.6 million statewide in the first year alone. Unless the above issues are addressed, I urge you to vote against H.3241.

Sincerely,

Name

Title and school district

Home Address

Your Legislators:

State House - [John King](#) (D-049)