

**FROM SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSN.
JANUARY 31, 2011**

ACTION NEEDED NOW

Please contact members of the House Education and Public Works Committee (see sample message and contact information below) by 1 p.m. Wednesday (February 2, 2011) and strongly urge them to vote against the bill to amend the charter school law ([H.3241](#)).

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The House Education and Public Works Committee is scheduled to take up the charter school bill. SCSBA opposes several provisions in the bill, including the following:

- The requirement of a school district to send all of its 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).
- The deletion, offered through an amendment by Rep. Ralph Norman, of a provision allowing local school district sponsors to retain up to 2 percent of total state and local appropriations per charter school for oversight expenses.
- The requirement of local sponsoring districts to allow conversion charter schools to stay in a school building and use resources, equipment and supplies free of charge for the life of the charter.
- The lowering of the vote requirement from parents for a traditional public school to convert to a charter school.
- The requirement that charter school students be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities at their resident school if the activities are not available at the charter school.

SAMPLE MESSAGE

Dear Rep. _____:

As a school board member in _____ and public school advocate, I strongly urge you to oppose the bill to amend the state's charter school act ([H.3241](#)). While the bill's aim to bring parity for charter schools may have good intentions, to do so with the use of local funds 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). Funds may be used to implement programs and/or services that local communities desire and that are not provided for with state dollars such as foreign language classes in elementary schools, magnet schools, etc.
- Local funds are often generated to supplement shortfalls in state funding to pay for non-student costs including employee benefits and programs.
- The school district funds this bill seeks to transfer to the state charter district are raised through the levy of property taxes by locally elected school boards or other locally elected officials who are held accountable for those funds. State-sponsored charter schools are not local schools. They are not built, staffed or operated with local taxpayer approval.

In addition, I urge you to vote "no" for other reasons including:

- There has been no analysis of H.3241 for the real or even potential fiscal impact to local school districts.
- If the state determines that state-sponsored charter schools are in need of additional funding, then it should fund them with additional state funds and not from local tax dollars appropriated for local school operations. This is a clear unfunded mandate.
- The legislature has already adopted a higher level of state funding to offset the lack of local funding of the state-sponsored charter school district even though the law was enacted with the understanding that there would be no local funds provided.
- There are more than 5,000 virtual school students in South Carolina, with nearly half of them coming from the private and home school sectors and therefore are not included in the local funds. This would be placing an undue and unplanned fiscal burden on local schools.

At a time when schools are confronted with unprecedented cuts in funding at the state and local levels and the state is facing a \$1 billion shortfall, it defies logic to approve legislation that would create a financial cost to local school districts. Please vote against the charter school bill ([H.3241](#)).

Thank you for your service to our state and for allowing me the opportunity to offer my opinion.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Address]

COMMITTEE MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION (click on names for email and other contact information)

[Phil Owens, Chairman](#) of Pickens County

[Jimmy Neal, 1st Vice Chair](#) of Lancaster County

[Don Bowen, 2nd Vice Chair](#) of Anderson and Oconee counties

[Todd Atwater](#) of Lexington County

[Eric J. Bikas](#) of Greenville and Pickens counties

[Lester Branham, Jr.](#) of Florence County

[Doug Brannon](#) of Spartanburg County

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[Joseph Daning](#) of Berkeley County

[Jerry Govan, Jr.](#) Orangeburg County

[Harold Mitchell, Jr.](#) of Spartanburg County

[Ralph Norman](#) of York County

[Andy Patrick](#) of Beaufort County

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[Mark Willis](#) of Greenville and Laurens counties