

THE Center for Education Reform



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CHARTER PROPOSAL PROMISES INNOVATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY *GEORGIA LEGISLATURE POISED TO APPROVE LEGISLATION*

Washington, D.C., February 16, 2007 – The first state to see a major charter school initiative introduced this year, Georgia legislators will have an opportunity in the coming days to approve a proposal introduced by Rep. Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) that permits more quality public school options for children.

Charter schools currently exist in Georgia but may only be approved by the local school board.

These schools have already had remarkable success, making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) at dramatically higher rates than conventional public schools for three consecutive years. Georgia charter school students also have a graduation rate of 83.6 percent, more than 14 percent higher than all public schools.

However, their growth has been severely limited by school boards that already have an overwhelming workload, dealing with the needs and requirements of educating 1.5 million kids statewide.

The new proposal would alleviate the full burden of chartering that currently rests only with school boards and permit public universities and cities to authorize charter schools.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Allow for three new entities to sponsor charter schools; the elected governing authority of a county or municipality; the board of trustees of an institution of the University System of Georgia; or the State Board of Education. (Laws with similar provisions exist in several states, including Florida, Indiana and Michigan).

- Give charters approved under a new authorizer their state funding portion plus an amount equivalent to 90 percent of the local funding portion.
- Require strong levels of accountability and standards for charters authorized under one of the additional authorizers.

Currently 31 other states have entities other than school boards that may approve and manage charter schools. States with multiple chartering authorities have 4.5 times more charter schools than states requiring local school board approval only. Local boards, however, are more likely to grant charters when state laws permit multiple authorizers. Ninety-six percent of the nation's charter schools are in states with multiple authorizers or a strong appeals process. These states are home to the highest quality charter schools.

“Universities and municipalities are great partners in public education,” said Center for Education Reform president Jeanne Allen. “By enabling them to become part of the process to bring about charter schools, Georgia teachers and parents will have more access to new, high quality public schools for their children.”

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