



For Immediate Release
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SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE ADVANCES NEW REGULATORY AGENCY FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

NEW POWER GIVEN TO STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON DC – A bill intended to create a new entity for approving charters schools but which actually creates a new state regulatory agency passed the full State Senate last week. Local charter school operators and national experts warned from the start of the legislative process that the effort would discourage - not create - more schools. The bill, HB 3010, was backed by Governor Mark Sanford and amended at the last minute to give more control and oversight of public charter schools to the State Department of Education.

The entity, the South Carolina Public Charter School District, would authorize charters and act as a local education agency, which means it would be responsible for administering all federal programs to the schools. Such regulatory responsibility requires government staff and resources to support it - functions that are currently performed by South Carolina school districts and the state Education Department. Successful charter states allow for entities independent from state agencies to authorize charter schools, without federal regulatory responsibility. The new school district also limits funding for charter schools to approximately 60 percent of monies currently allotted to other public charter schools.

Senators were cautioned throughout the year by representatives of the state's leading charter schools that they were creating an unnecessary duplicative bureaucracy that will cost the taxpayers of South Carolina as much as an additional \$3 million per year. The Director of the state's largest charter school, Greenville Technical Charter High School, said that the bill in its current form is misguided. "It is incomprehensible that our policymakers would take actions to create an unproven course of action, and ignore the research, when forty other states have experiences that can teach us how to ensure strong, healthy, equitable charter schools," said

Greenville director Fred Crawford.

Governor Sanford, a champion of choices for children, told pro-charter forces who opposed this effort that, "the matter was out of his hands," but the flawed bill had widespread public support from the Governor's staff throughout the process.

The legislation now returns to the House where the new provisions must either be accepted or deliberated in conference prior to becoming law.

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