



NEWSBEAT...

Newsletter from the Office of
Senator Bill Perkins

No. 15, MAY 2010

CHARTER SCHOOL REFORM

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS



Left picture, Senator Bill Perkins chairs public hearing on Charter School accountability, April 22, 2010, Center picture, Leading education scholar Diane Ravitch testifies at public hearing, Right picture Mothers whose children are in Charter Schools give testimony at public hearing

(The following letter was sent by Senator Perkins to his Senate colleagues before the Senate vote on raising the cap on Charter Schools)

May 3, 2010

Dear Colleague,

We will soon be voting on a bill that would raise the cap on the number of charter schools authorized to operate in New York state.

I am sending you two stories which appeared in New York Times in the last two weeks. These stories graphically illustrate why we should not rush to divert more money from public schools into the charter experiment.

Last week's story raises serious concerns about charters' record of financial malfeasance and the potential for greater corruption.

This week's story details charters' uneven educational outcomes. "Last year, one of the most comprehensive studies, by researchers from Stanford University, found that fewer than one-fifth of charter schools nationally offered a better education than comparable local schools, almost half offered an equivalent education and more than a third, 37 percent, were 'significantly worse.'"

Those few charters that have achieved the best results do so with generous

funding from private donors. Independent researchers "question whether successful charters could be 'scaled up' without sacrificing quality and without heavy subsidies from private donors." In other words, charters will never be able to serve all the students currently in the public school system.

Yet, we are being asked to invest more public money in the charter experiment. After 10 years, the results of the experiment are at best ambiguous. It has yet to produce a cure for what ails our public education system.

Charters serve 3% of public school students, while the other 97% suffer from benign neglect. By focusing on a small percentage of schools that receive celebrity attention, we are distracted from addressing the real problem: how to improve educational outcomes for all students in the schools they attend today.

Please acquaint yourself with the facts reported in the stories I have attached. In light of these facts, and similar facts that were brought out in the Corporations Committee's recent hearing on the charter industry, I cannot in good conscience vote to increase the number of charter schools. I urge you to do the same.

Senator Bill Perkins

Media References on Charter Schools ...

New York Senate Video Link to Public Hearing on Charter Schools, April 22,

<http://www.nysenate.gov/event/2010/apr/22/our-democratic-vision-public-education-being-fulfilled-decade-later-look-growing-c>

NY Daily News, May 7, 2010

Albany Charter Cash Cow: Big banks making a bundle on new construction as schools bear the cost

By Juan Gonzalez

http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/education/2010/05/07/2010-05-07_albany_charter_cash_cow_big_banks_making_a_bundle_on_new_construction_as_schools.html

New York Times, May 5, 2010

Why Charter Schools Fail the Test

By Charles Murray

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/05/opinion/05murray.html?scp=1&sq=Why+Charter+Schools+Fail+the+Test&st=nyt>

Philadelphia Inquirer, May 3, 2010

U.S. probe widens to 18 city charters

By Martha Woodall

<http://www.philly.com/philly/education/92648524.html?viewAll=y>

New York Times, May 1, 2010

Despite Push, Success at Charter Schools Is Mixed

By Trip Gabriel

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/02/education/02charters.html?scp=1&sq=Despite+Push%2C+Success+at+Charter+Schools+Is+Mixed&st=nyt>

New York Times, April 23, 2010

For Charter School Company, Issues of Spending and Control

By Stephanie Strom

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F05E5D81030F937A15757C0A9669D8B63&sec=&spn=&pagewanted=2>