

CHARTER SCHOOLS – LPRAC. Raised Bill 1096 An Act Concerning Charter Schools.

**We already have numerous accountability measures in the existing underlying current statute.**

**Hurts Latinos:** To the extent that there will be a hold up for development of new charter schools that address the needs of Latinos, thereby taking choice away from Latino families and leaving Latino students in poorly performing schools that do not meet their needs. Alternatives and options are removed. I'm not willing to take that risk. We have enough regulation already and this ties the hands of charter schools in a way that is not beneficial to Latinos.

**This bill proposes that the Appropriations Committee and the General Assembly become the final authorizers of a certificate of approval for a charter and, as a practical matter, have veto power over the BOE authorization of a charter.** (The certificate only becomes a charter if GA appropriates money for that certificate of approval for a charter; if GA doesn't appropriate the money, the certificate does not become a charter. No money, no charter). **Now you have a potential conflict of visions and conflict of power which leads to gridlock. Welcome to Washington, D.C. (See Lines 53-58 of Raised Bill 1096).**

The Appropriations Committee highly political and partisan committee; many decisions entirely based on who has the most votes. The Bd. of Education is a more independent, professional, less political, and less partisan Authorizer. The reality is that the public perceives the Appropriations Committee and the Legislature as partisan and political institutions.

The Appropriations Committee and the General Assembly vote on a sundry array of matters and bills, not specifically Education matters. The legislature does not have an adequate infrastructure to carry out authorizer tasks which is the reason why, when Charter Schools were first created in CT in 1997, the Legislature realized that Education matters were best suited for the Board of Education who could give education matters the detailed and expert attention education matters deserve. The BOE deals with Education. **Supporting this bill is going backwards.**

“Experiences in various states with both public and non-public authorizing entities reveal that all types of authorizers can be successful if they meet at least three criteria: a clear desire to become an authorizer; enough political insulation to allow data- driven decisions; and, the ability to create adequate infrastructure to carry out their authorizer tasks.” (pp.10-11 NAPCS Model Law document).

However, the Legislature has plenary jurisdiction and, as a practical matter, it can approve itself and is only accountable to itself and to the people. Not enough political independence and political insulation accountability guard rails around the Legislature and its committees for them to be authorizers.

Raised bill 1096 further calls for “On and after July 1, 2015, such

- 41 state board may grant initial certificates of approval for charters for
- 42 local and state charter schools in accordance with this section, except
- 43 that such state board shall not grant such initial certificates of approval
- 44 for charters **until the Commission of Education develops a**

45 comprehensive state-wide charter school plan and conducts a review  
 46 of charter schools in existence on July 1, 2015, and such plan and  
 47 review are approved by the joint standing committee of the General  
 48 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. On or  
 49 before February 1, 2017, the commissioner shall submit such plan and  
 50 review to such joint standing committee. On or before April 1, 2017,  
 51 such joint standing committee shall advise the commissioner of their  
 52 approval, denial or modifications, if any, of such plan and review.”

**This is code for Charter School Common Core** and, as a practical matter, is obstructionist to the creation of new charters. It’s an attempt to apply to Charter Schools the same standards as our already demonstrated to be low-performing public schools, which can lead to the conclusion of no difference between charter schools and public schools.

It’s a preliminary step towards accepting the null hypothesis that Charter Schools = Public Schools, therefore, no effect of the Charter School treatment condition because no statistically significant difference. No difference, therefore, allowing for the eventual interpretation of “Why have Charter Schools?” There can’t be a difference if what you’re going to do in the charter schools is what you do in the public schools. The whole **concept of charter schools** was to allow **specialization and experimentation** by qualified educators and developmentalists and the creation of new and different approaches to educating students in developmentally and cognitively appropriate ways. The point was to **NOT** tie educators’ hands behind their backs with cumbersome regulations. That’s what makes charter schools unique. It’s probably one of the most educationally progressive things we can do; we’re stepping outside “the box.”

**One hundred (100) lines of the underlying current existing statute (appearing in lines 241-341 of the raised bill) deal thoroughly with charter schools that do not reach criterion and the issue of revocation. Their charters do not get renewed. There are compliance requirements already in place. We don’t need another statute.**

**With regard to English Language Learners (ELL), the current, existing underlying statute already addresses requirements for ELL enrollment (see lines 97, 239, & 262 in raised bill 1096). We do not need another statute.**

LPRAC Memorandum to LPRAC Commissioners stated: “There should be a moratorium on new charter schools until all stakeholders have had an opportunity to evaluate compliance with nationally accepted accountability standards. Furthermore, a moratorium should remain in place until charter schools that draw students from Latino communities increase their enrollment of English Language Learners to a level that is comparable with traditional public schools. LPRAC should support this bill.” Please note that Raised Bill 1096 does not address the issue of raising ELL enrollment to the level of public schools. The “standards” of which they speak are not “National Standards,” see Table 1 of NACSA report: 21 states (including CT) have only one or two non-district authorizers. Are these “standards,” created by a select group, endorsed by the U.S.

Dept. of Education? Not all 50 states have this, 43/50 states do.

**This bill doesn't accomplish what is being presented by some proponents as the two Gold Standards for Model Law and Accountability: NAPCS & NACSA. That's what should be studied - what should the standards be for Connecticut. Who is to say that the other standards are the best standards for CT? Who is behind these two groups? Are they endorsed by the U.S. Dept. of Education? Those two documents must be researched carefully. The answer is not to stop the creation of new charters. An answer is to look at the standards we already have and determine if changes need to be made.**

**This bill is anti-Charter and anti-competition. Perhaps someone, some group, is afraid of the competition by charter schools, especially the successful ones or new ones that can do things better, and do not want any more money being diverted away from the public schools.**

**Hurts Latinos:** To the extent that there will be a hold up for development of new charter schools that address the needs of Latinos, thereby taking choice away from Latino families and leaving Latino students in poorly performing schools that do not meet their needs. Alternatives, options removed. I'm not willing to take that risk. We have enough regulation already and this ties the hands of charter schools in a way that is not beneficial to members of the Latino community.

Please note that support for raised bill 1096 passed LPRAC last night, 3-18-15, by **ONLY ONE VOTE**; it was **NOT unanimous**. Commissioner Ruben Rodriguez was absent for the vote; he told me he had a flat tire on the way to the LOB last night. He called into the meeting which lasted over 2.5 hrs, and then he said his cell phone went dead and then he had the flat tire. He told me he was voting "No" on 1096. He gave me his permission to advise you as such and you can confirm with him.

**There should be a Task Force to study this issue. I am requesting that you do not vote for this bill.**

*Dr. Ruby O'Neill*

(PS: While I agree with the recommendation that that Charter Management organizations hired by the Charter School should be non-profit, this bill does not benefit our community).

