



The Charter School Accountability Agenda

An 11-Point Program for Reform

The number of charter schools has grown rapidly over the last ten years and while some have succeeded, independent studies show that other charter school operators have failed to perform, wasted taxpayer dollars and in some cases stolen money. The performance and operational failures are largely the result of states failing to provide the kind of oversight that would improve student learning and reduce instances of fraud.

There is ample evidence that the American people want public control and accountability for all publicly funded schools. Surveys show that Americans overwhelmingly favor common sense proposals to strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, prevent fraud, serve high-need students and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

Despite diverse viewpoints on how best to educate the next generation, we all share a bedrock belief in the value and importance of public education. What is needed is a renewed commitment to the fundamental democratic principles of transparency, accountability, equal opportunity and stewardship of public funds.

The Charter School Accountability Agenda will ensure that charter schools are fulfilling their role in education as lawmakers intended.

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Accountability

- Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to open board meetings to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings.
- Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to release to parents and the public how they spend taxpayer money, including their annual budgets and contracts.
- Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds.

Protect Neighborhood Schools

- Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools.
- Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area.

Protect Taxpayer Funds

- Require charter schools to return taxpayer money to the school district for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year.
- Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.
- Prohibit charter schools from spending taxpayer dollars on advertising or marketing.
- Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement.

High Quality Education for Every Child

- Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements.
- Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.

For more information about the Charter School Accountability Agenda contact the Center for Popular Democracy at kserrette@populardemocracy.org or In the Public Interest at info@inthepublicinterest.org. You can also find a set of comprehensive charter reforms in the Annenberg Institute for School Reform's report, "Public Accountability for Charter Schools".