

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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Charter School Reform Poll

Introduction

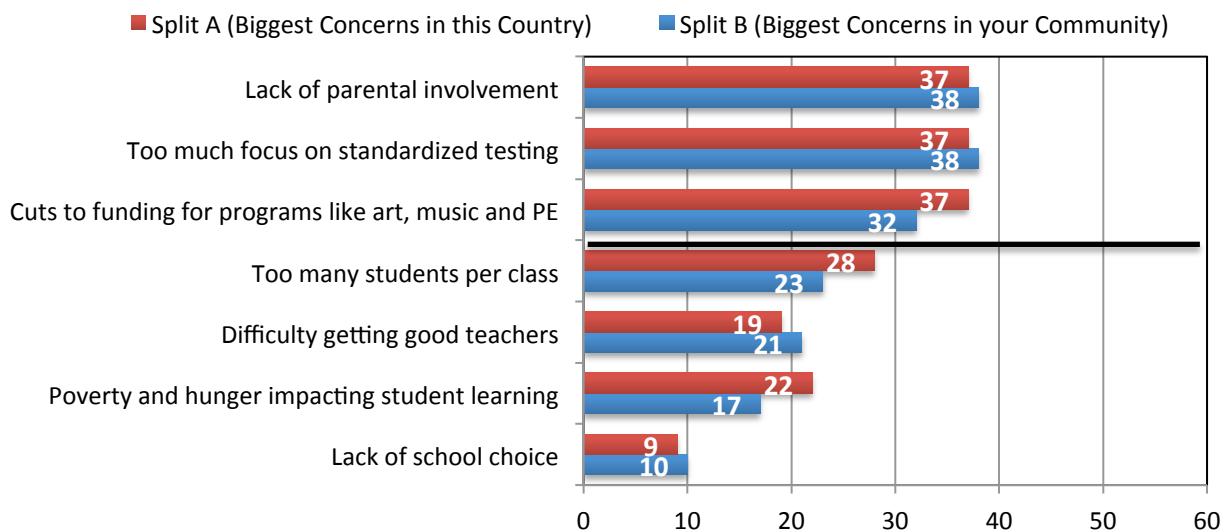
A new survey shows that Americans overwhelmingly favor a series of proposals to reform charter schools. Proposals garnering broad support include initiatives to strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, prevent fraud, serve high-need students and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

The following are key findings from the national poll of 1,000 registered voters, which was conducted January 25th – 29th, 2015:

Key Findings

- **Voters have positive views of their public schools and public school teachers.** Sixty-three percent of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood excellent or good, while just 29 percent rate them fair or poor. Voters are more likely to say public schools in their neighborhood are getting better (31 percent) than getting worse (16 percent), while a 42 percent plurality are not seeing much change either way. By more than 6:1, voters are more likely to have favorable than unfavorable views of public school teachers (68 percent favorable – 11 percent unfavorable).
- **Lack of school choice does not register as a top concern.** Voters focus on lack of parental involvement, too much focus on standardized tests, cuts to school funding, and class size as the biggest problems facing K-through-12 education. Lack of school choice ranks dead last on their list of concerns.
- **Voters expressed mixed views on charter schools with a majority opposing expansion of charters.** With no description, 44 percent favor charter schools, 18 percent oppose them and 38 percent do not have enough information to form an opinion. After a neutral description, 52 percent favor charter schools, while 38 percent oppose them. At the same time, 62 want to keep the number of charter schools the same or reduce the number of charter schools in their area, while 29 percent want to increase the number of charter schools in their area.

Top Concerns: Lack of Parental Involvement, Over-Emphasis on Testing, and Funding Cuts



- Voters have limited awareness of charter schools and while they support charter schools, they don't want to expand them.** When simply asked their opinion about charter schools, 44 percent favor charter schools, 18 percent oppose them and 38 percent do not have enough information to form an opinion. At the same time, 62 want to keep the number of charter schools the same or reduce the number of charter schools in their area, while 29 percent want to increase the number of charter schools in their area.
- Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Huge majorities of voters favor proposals to strengthen transparency and accountability, teacher training and qualifications, anti-fraud measures, ensuring high-need students are served and making sure neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

	Total Support %
Transparency & Accountability	
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to open board meetings to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings	89
Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds	88
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	86
Protect Neighborhood Schools	
Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area	78

Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools	72
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	79
Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement	71
Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools .	65
Prohibit charter schools from spending taxpayer dollars on advertising or marketing .	56
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	89
Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.	80

Methodology

GBA Strategies conducted a national poll of 1,000 registered voters January 25-29, 2015 on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a national voter file and phone numbers were selected randomly, providing a statistically representative sample. The poll was administered by professional interviewers via telephone with respondents being reached on cell phones and landlines.