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To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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## New Poll Results on Colorado Charter Schools

### Introduction

With the number of charter schools rapidly increasing across the country, a new survey shows that Colorado voters embrace proposals to reform the way charter schools are authorized and managed. The public overwhelmingly supports initiatives to prevent fraud, strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, serve high-need students and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

The following are key findings from a statewide poll in Colorado of 500 registered voters, which was conducted January 10th – 13th, 2016[1]:

### Key Findings

- **Voters offer public schools and public school teachers very high ratings.** Sixty-nine percent of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood excellent or good, while just 26 percent rate them fair or poor. Voters are more likely to say public schools in their neighborhood are getting better (29 percent) than getting worse (14 percent), while a 47 percent plurality are not seeing much change either way. By nearly 7:1, voters are more likely to have favorable than unfavorable views of public school teachers (67 percent favorable – 12 percent unfavorable).

[1] GBA Strategies conducted a statewide poll of 500 registered voters in Colorado January 10th – 13th, 2016 on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a Colorado 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.

- **<u>School Concerns</u>: the over-reliance on standardized testing is the top concern** and cuts to school funding, lack of parental involvement, and class size are also big concerns.

- **Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Large majorities of voters back proposals to strengthen transparency (disclose outside funding and to disclose they are exempt from certain laws), teacher training and qualifications, implement anti-fraud measures, ensure high-need students are served and making sure neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

| Top Charter School Reform Proposals | Total Support % |
|---|---|
| **Transparency & Accountability** | |
| Require state officials to conduct **regular audits** of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds | **88** |
| Require charter schools to **publicly disclose that they are exempt from some state or school district laws** including the law requiring public school teachers to be licensed to teach. | **76** |
| Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to **disclose outside funding including gifts, grants, and donations**. | **74** |
| **Protect Neighborhood Schools** | |
| Ensure that **neighborhood public schools do not lose funding** when new charter schools open in their area | **72** |
| Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an **analysis of the impact** the school will have on neighborhood public schools | **69** |
| **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 | **76** |
| Stop the creation of new charter schools if charter school authorizers have not shown the ability to **prevent fraud and mismanagement** | **74** |
| Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from **financially benefiting from their schools**. | **67** |
| Require new charter schools to be **operated by non-profit organizations**, not for-profit companies | **63** |
| **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** | **83** |
| Require charter schools to use **enrollment and registration policies that encourage special needs students** to enroll at the same level as neighborhood public schools. | **75** |
| Require charter schools to **serve high-need students** such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools. | **73** |

Many charter school reform proposals receive majority support across party lines and by supporters and opponents of charter schools.

| Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to disclose outside funding including gifts, grants, and donations | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 79 | 13 |
| Independents | 76 | 20 |
| Republicans | 71 | 25 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 63 | 32 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 91 | 4 |
| **Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 92 | 8 |
| Independents | 87 | 11 |
| Republicans | 84 | 10 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 85 | 13 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 94 | 6 |
| **Require charter schools to publicly disclose that they are exempt from some state or school district laws including the law requiring public school teachers to be licensed to teach.** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 85 | 11 |
| Independents | 77 | 17 |
| Republicans | 64 | 30 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 72 | 23 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 85 | 9 |
| **Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 87 | 10 |
| Independents | 72 | 21 |
| Republicans | 58 | 37 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 57 | 37 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 97 | 3 |
| **Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 86 | 13 |
| Independents | 65 | 27 |
| Republicans | 58 | 39 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 60 | 39 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 78 | 16 |
| **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** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 86 | 10 |
| Independents | 74 | 19 |
| Republicans | 71 | 27 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 67 | 28 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 92 | 5 |

| Stop the creation of new charter schools if charter school authorizers have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 84 | 12 |
| Independents | 75 | 19 |
| Republicans | 62 | 32 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 67 | 27 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 89 | 9 |
| **Require new charter schools to be operated by non-profit organizations, not for-profit companies** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 80 | 16 |
| Independents | 60 | 31 |
| Republicans | 48 | 38 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 60 | 36 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 72 | 18 |
| **Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 74 | 21 |
| Independents | 66 | 26 |
| Republicans | 61 | 34 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 64 | 31 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 83 | 14 |
| **Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 90 | 9 |
| Independents | 82 | 17 |
| Republicans | 79 | 19 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 80 | 20 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 93 | 7 |
| **Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 84 | 14 |
| Independents | 70 | 26 |
| Republicans | 63 | 30 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 60 | 37 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 90 | 10 |
| **Require charter schools to use enrollment and registration policies that encourage special needs students to enroll at the same level as neighborhood public schools.** | | |
| | Favor | Oppose |
| Democrats | 85 | 11 |
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| Republicans | 66 | 25 |
| People Who Favor Charter Schools | 68 | 25 |
| People Who Oppose Charter Schools | 95 | 3 |