

It has come to our attention that there may be upcoming legislation designed to eliminate the city's charter school authorizing ability. This type of legislation would not only limit quality school options to better serve students, it also could have unintended consequences on the funding of other public schools such as MPS.

First and foremost, any conversation around city education policy should be centered on quality, and the city's authorized public charter schools have contributed greatly to that effort. For example, in the 2013-14 school year, seven out of ten of the city's charter schools were deemed to be meeting expectations or above on the statewide report card. For the district, just 25% of schools achieved the same results. Similarly, reading and math growth in the city-authorized charter schools outpace not just the city average, but the entire state average in reading and math growth. Clearly, the city-authorized charter schools are contributing to positive outcomes for Milwaukee students and families. If there is a quality, well-researched proposal for a school that has buy-in from the community, why would the city limit itself from even *considering* it? This doesn't make sense if the city seeks to improve outcomes for the public good.

Secondly, if the city is concerned about funding for district schools, let me state unequivocally that we share in that concern. But eliminating an option for public charter schools is not the solution. In fact, it could actually exacerbate funding pressures on the district.

For example, we know that if city public charters were no longer an option, those students wouldn't disappear; they'd choose another school option. Some may choose other charters, some would go to the district, and yet others would take advantage of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Students who decide to move from a charter school to a choice (MPCP) school would be moving from a school option that currently counts those students in poverty rates for the district's funding levels to a school option that does not, thereby reducing the state aid formula of funding to MPS. There could be other unintended funding consequences from such a move as well in terms of federal grants and sum-certain appropriations to the district that would then stretch those existing funding streams even further within MPS.

To be clear, we strongly advocate for the city to only authorize charter school proposals that can provide viable quality options for families and students; there is no need to authorize low-potential schools. We would gladly contribute to discussions (and have) on how to drive quality forward in the city's existing schools as well as the vision and direction of public education to ensure all students attend a quality, equitably-funded school.

A legislative proposal that intentionally and blindly shuts off the possibility of more quality school options does not accomplish the goals of either increasing quality in our city or addressing funding issues for our public schools, whether they are charter or district schools.

We urge you to consider both the short- and long-term repercussions of limiting the city's charter school authorizing ability – not only what this means for the education outlook for our city but also what it means for providing quality educational options to your constituents.

Sincerely,

Sean Roberts

Milwaukee Charter School Advocates