

2013-15 Budget Issue Paper Charter School Contract Regulations

[LFB 2013-15 Budget Summary: Page 386, #14]

Governor's Proposal:

Increase flexibility for charter schools under contract with a school board by: (a) requiring that instrumentality charter contracts specify a per-pupil payment commensurate with the school district's average per-pupil costs; (b) granting the school operator sole discretion over budget, curriculum, professional development, and personnel (except where health and safety are concerned); and (c) prohibiting a school board from imposing on a charter school any requirement from which a charter school would otherwise be exempt.

DPI Position: Oppose and request to be removed from budget

Rationale for Opposition/Support:

❖ **Removal of local control**

Wisconsin has been a charter school success story. Fifteen years ago, Wisconsin had 17 charter schools that enrolled around 1,100 students. Today, we have 237 charter schools located in 97 districts across the state educating more than 43,000 students. Wisconsin ranks in the top ten states nationwide for charter schools, creating new educational options for children and parents. Of these schools, 216 are established in local communities, by locally elected school board members.

This bill would impose Madison's will on local school boards and communities. These mandates would override agreements between charter school governing boards and school boards, even if both parties agree that their current agreement is in the best interest of both the community and the children enrolled in the charter school.

❖ **Per-pupil funding limits flexibility and innovation**

Tying the funding for a charter school to the average per pupil cost is not consistent with how many contracts are currently structured, where school districts pay for large portions of a charter schools costs (health insurance, building costs, etc...) while providing a discretionary amount of per-pupil funding to the charter school. Pushing these costs onto charter schools will require them to manage additional risk and hire new staff with expertise in these areas.

In addition, tying the funding to an average per pupil cost will impede school districts from authorizing charter schools that require a higher than normal investment, such as schools focused on STEM fields or schools that need additional capital investment.