

# Charter school round-up (22)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Charter Schools, Education, Serious Issues June 15, 2019

*(22nd in a series on Education and Charter Schools)*

There is something we can do if we are concerned about the impact of charter schools on our Bethlehem Area School District budget particularly.

That will come in the next post in this series.

But first let me clean out the mail bag on this issue — with thanks.

Here's more to think about.

*Sarah Hall, "Reform sought as cyber charter school costs top \$42M in NEPA districts." The Citizens' Voice, April 7, 2019.*

- Cyber charter schools are privately operated, publicly funded schools authorized by the state and paid for by school districts. Advocates say cyber schools provide options for families seeking choice for their children's educations. Children learn virtually on charter school-provided computers, at no cost to the families. The cost comes to the districts instead. Bills in the state House and Senate would allow districts with their own cyber programs to stop paying tuition to cyber charter schools. If a student decided to attend the cyber charter school, the family would be responsible for the tuition.

*“A call to action from Pennsylvania’s urban school superintendents.”  
April 11, 2019.*

- It’s also time to stop kicking the can down the road on charter funding reform. Pennsylvania’s charter law needs an overhaul, including setting the bar higher for charter operators. It’s not about district schools versus charter schools. It’s about high-quality schools, period. The state’s charter funding model needs to reflect that.
- One example is the chronic underperformance of cyber charter schools, which are costly to taxpayers and fail to deliver for students. Thirteen of the state’s 14 cyber charter schools are on the list of the lowest performing schools in Pennsylvania. School district-operated cyber charters perform better at a fraction of the cost.

*Stop the Charter School Expansion Bills!*

- Last week Republican members of the House Education Committee advanced two charter school expansion bills that deliver the charter school industry’s wish list. We anticipate that the House will vote on these bills in early June.
- By a party-line vote of 14 to 10, committee members passed House Bills [356](#) and [357](#). These bills strip communities of the ability to plan and exercise appropriate fiscal and academic oversight over their public education systems. These bills also weaken accountability, allow for the unfettered expansion of even the lowest performing charter schools, and fail to protect taxpayers and students from failing schools.
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