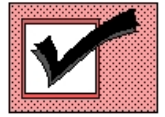


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Why Charter Schools are not the Answer by Southern Echo and the MS Delta Catalyst Roundtable

1. Most charters schools do not outperform traditional public schools, according to numerous national studies. Nationally, 37% underperform traditional public schools similarly situated, 46% perform on a par with traditional public schools similarly situated, and 17% outperform traditional public schools similarly situated.
2. Since the money follows the students, massive amounts of state funding would be diverted from traditional public schools into privately-owned, privately-governed publicly-funded charter schools. Since the traditional public schools are already underfunded -- *\$230 million in 2011; \$1 billion over the past 5 years; and Gov. Bryant proposes to underfund public education by more than \$300 million in 2012* – draining funds away from the traditional public schools will further underfund and undermine the ability of traditional public schools to deliver a quality public education to all students, regardless of race, class, disability, status or geographic location. If charter schools receive the same funding as traditional public schools the charter schools will also be underfunded.
3. The proposed charter school bills do not provide for any meaningful parental engagement in the creation of the schools, the governance of the schools, policy formation and implementation in the schools, or meaningful participation in the development of the culture of the schools. Many charter entrepreneurs do not provide for meaningful parental engagement in the actual operation of their charters.
4. The experience with charter schools is that they tend to be smaller and more selective than traditional schools regarding who attends the charter. They do not serve the students who do not attend them. A lottery selection process, by its nature, determines that only some students are chosen to attend the charter school. This does nothing for the education of those who remain in the traditional public schools.
5. The experience with charter schools is that they are more segregated on the basis of race and wealth (class) than traditional public schools. Further, the charters systematically under-serve children with disabilities, whose needs sometimes involve substantial additional support services to ensure they receive the quality education to which they are entitled. Charters do not want to pay for these services. In addition, charter schools, which tout their value on not being subject to state laws and regulations, often expel students who have either behavioral or academic problems rather than addressing their needs, which traditional public schools would not be permitted to do under state laws and regulations.
6. If authorizing charter schools cannot be avoided, then:

- a. Legislation should confine the creation of charter schools to *underperforming* school districts and schools. There simply is no justification for public funding of charter schools in *successful* or higher-performing school districts while there is underfunding of traditional public schools.
- b. The charter schools must be held accountable to the same educational and administrative accountability assessment and standards as are the traditional public schools.
- c. The application to create a charter school must include a comprehensive plan for a quality educational curriculum and its effective delivery to the students, the democratic governance of the school, the administration of the school, and the evaluation process to determine the length of the charter and what constitutes success and failure to meet the goals of the charter school.
- d. No charter should be longer than three (3) years.
- e. The charter schools must be open to all children enrolled in the *underperforming* schools.
- f. The only authorizer and terminator of charter schools must be the State Board of Education, which has the most experience and knowledge to evaluate applications to create or maintain charter schools.