

SB

182

SFIN

FILE

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1997 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

No. 1
Bill Version: SB182
(S) Publish Date: 5/8/97

Revision Date: _____ Dept. Affected: EDUCATION
Title: An act relating to the establishment and BRU: Teaching and Learning Support
operation of charter schools. Component: Quality Schools
Sponsor: WARD
Requester: Senate Health, Education & Social Services COMPONENT SERIAL NO. _____ 2147

Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | FY98 | FY99 | FY00 | FY01 | FY02 | FY03 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| PERSONAL SERVICES | 71.6 | 71.6 | 71.6 | 71.6 | 71.6 | 71.6 |
| TRAVEL | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| CONTRACTUAL | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| SUPPLIES | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| EQUIPMENT | | | | | | |
| LAND & STRUCTURES | | | | | | |
| GRANTS, CLAIMS | | | | | | |
| MISCELLANEOUS | | | | | | |
| TOTAL OPERATING | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 |
| CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| CHANGES IN REVENUES | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1002 Federal Receipts | | | | | | |
| 1003 GF Match | | | | | | |
| 1004 GF | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts | | | | | | |
| Other: | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 | 84.5 |

Estimate of current year (FY97) cost: \$

POSITIONS:

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|--|--|--|--|
| FULL-TIME | 1.0 | | | | |
| PART-TIME | | | | | |
| TEMPORARY | | | | | |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The legislation establishes a 7 member state Board of Charter Schools to consider applications for preliminary approval of charter schools, and requires interaction with the state Board of Education. This legislation will require staff to work with the new Board of Charter Schools, the public and school districts and coordinate with the state Board of Education in preparing and reviewing applications, responding to questions, and assisting in appeal procedures when necessary. Costs include establishing an Education Specialist II, Range 21A; travel for one face to face meeting per year; contractual for audio conferences, phone, fax, printing and mailing; and supplies.

Prepared by: Nancy Buell *Nancy Buell* Phone: 465-8689
Division: Teaching and Learning Support Date: 5/2/97
Approved by Commissioner: Shirley J. Holloway, Ph.D. *Shirley J. Holloway* Date: 5/2/97
Agency: Department of Education

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 7, 1997

To: Senator Bert Sharp, Co-Chair Senate Finance

From: Senator Jerry Ward *JW*

Re: SB 182 / *HB 229*

SB 182 "*An Act relating to Charter Schools*" was passed out of Senate HESS Committee today with a fiscal note as attached.

The bill has a further referral to Senate Finance. Because of the lateness in the session, I am requesting that you waive SB 182 to Rules so that the bill can be passed through the Senate before the end of session.

F498 - \$84.5

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| CONTRACTUAL | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| SUPPLIES | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| EQUIPMENT | | | | | | |
| LAND & STRUCTURES | | | | | | |
| GRANTS, CLAIMS | | | | | | |
| MISCELLANEOUS | | | | | | |
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Sponsor Statement

SB 182

"An Act relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools"

Education must be the number one priority in Alaska. Educators and parents alike have come to recognize that charter schools are one of the more valuable tools available to reform Alaska's educational system. Education reform is a top priority in many states and Alaska needs to join the rest of the country.

Alaska passed a charter school law in 1995. Unfortunately the law is deficient in many areas. As a result of these deficiencies, few charter schools have been started. After extensive meetings with charter school groups, parents and educators interested in opening charter schools, Senate Bill 182 has been introduced to strengthen our charter school program and our educational system as a whole.

The three major factors around which educational reform is based are parental involvement, educational choice and measuring student performance. Senate Bill 182 addresses each of these factors.

SB 182 strengthens existing law by clarifying that charter schools are in fact public schools though they may still be in competition with non-charter schools. This bill establishes multiple ways of establishing charter schools, provides for a local school board for charter schools as well as a state school board for charter schools.

SB 182 extends the sunset date for the charter school law, removes the limit on the number of charter schools that can be established, provides for flexibility on site decisions, and most importantly, provides for educational choice.

This legislation maintains local control over education. Only when a local school board rejects an application from a charter school group can that group appeal to the statewide charter school board. Even when a charter school is granted at the state level, the control over that school remains under local control.



DEGREE OF
AUTONOMY THAT
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CHARTER SCHOOLS
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HEALTHY
COMPETITION
FOR PUBLIC
SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

A CHARTER

In East Los Angeles, about a mile and a half from the site of the Rodney King riots, sits Vaughn Street School. Most of the children at this elementary school speak English as their second language and live in neighborhoods most of us would be frightened to walk through. There was a time when the children had to step around a dead body as they approached the school's entryway. It was no one's idea of a healthy learning environment.

In 1992, Vaughn Street's pupils ranked in the ninth percentile in reading—91 percent of public school students in America could read better than they—and the 14th percentile in math. Now, reading and math scores rank in the 47th and 59th percentile respectively. Today, students learn about computers hands-on in the new, \$1.6 mil-

Connie Koprowicz tracks education issues for NCSL. Dianna Gordon is an assistant editor of State Legislatures.

lion Next Century Learning Center. Today, parents from more wealthy neighborhoods want to send their kids to Vaughn.

What spurred the overwhelming changes in this 1,200-pupil, inner-city public school? According to Vaughn Street Principal Yvonne Chan, it was freedom from bureaucracy. "Take off the handcuffs; free my hands so I can do my job," Chan said in Seattle's Rainier Club where she was the keynote speaker this past fall at the National Conference on School Choice, sponsored by Washington's Educational Excellence Coalition.

Vaughn Street Elementary School became California's first charter school in 1992. And it is the charter school law that Chan credits for providing the freedom she needed to turn the school around. In addition to test scores, attendance improved—so much so that the school receives an additional

\$300,000 per year in per-pupil allotments from the state. Volunteers from the community built a low wall around the school to signify its separation from its troubled surroundings. And family programs such as health services and child care are available in school facilities so parents with few transportation options can get one-stop help.

Family involvement is a key ingredient in Vaughn's success, says Chan. "My school is an inner-city school. Many parents are immigrants, and families live in garages. They have little money. But they put their kids first."

Although California's charter law allows the hiring of noncertified teachers, the decision makers at Vaughn Street School (Chan and the teachers—as a team) choose to employ teachers who are certified. They have a good relationship with the teacher's union. After all, they have the same goal: teaching kids well. Still, Vaughn has saved some

FOR CHANGE

By Connie Koprowicz and Dianna Gordon

money by hiring more new teachers than the typical California public school—something the charter law allows them to do.

And money is an issue. In the first year of operation as a charter school, freedom to make budgeting decisions led to the \$1.6 million savings, which paid for the new 14-classroom technology building—the Next Century Learning Center. In addition to savings on salaries, Chan negotiated contracts for meals, payroll preparation and transportation that provided equal or better service quality at less than school district costs.

A ROUTE TO REFORM?

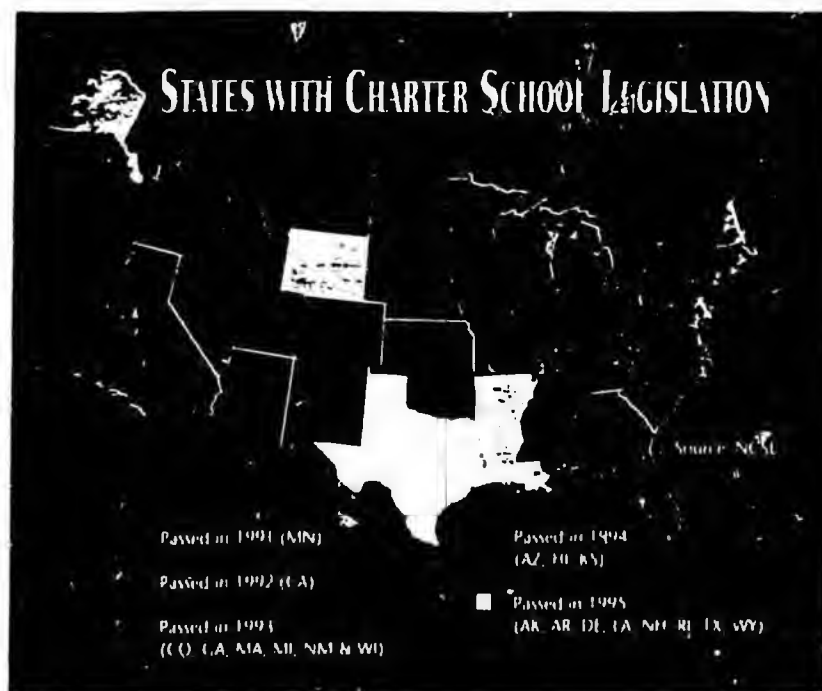
California was the second state to pass a charter school law. Minnesota was first in 1991, and 17 other states have followed their lead. Yet it remains to be seen if charter schools are a good route to education reform.

By definition, a charter school is an autonomous public school; a free-standing, nonprofit entity run by a group of parents, teachers, businesspeople or, in some cases, universities. Their strength is lodged in their autonomy. Under strong state charter laws, the schools are directed only by their self-selected governing boards. Their goals for education are written in the charters. Local school boards play a minimal role once the charter is granted. They do not hire or fire personnel for charter schools. They cannot dictate budget or curriculum.

Accountability for charter schools is twofold: first, if they don't meet the goals set forth in the charter, the charter can be revoked. Second, parents can vote with their feet. And with each child who leaves the school goes the state funding for that child's education.

The missing link is a tangible success rate displayed through graphs, charts and numbers. Charter and education experts agree it's too soon to know how or even if charter schools are truly reforming education. Will other schools achieve successes like Vaughn Street or is the Los Angeles school a grand exception—the product of Yvonne Chan's untailing leadership?

Even in Minnesota, the state that pio-



neered charters in 1991, it's too early to tell how these new schools are doing, too soon to fully judge their impact on state education, according to Representative Becky Kelso, the author of the House charter bill.

Kelso does say she's pleased with what has happened over the last four years. And she believes that the 17 charter schools in her state are reshaping public education "to a degree."

THE GREAT EQUALIZER?

What Kelso finds amazing is the number of states that leapt into the charter pool without waiting to see how Minnesota's program worked out. "It's been surprising how one state [Minnesota] passing charter school legislation has had the hole-in-the-dam effect that it has had. I'm surprised at the number of states that passed similar legislation so quickly."

Apparently, the charter school concept fit the expectations of lawmakers eager to change an educational system that has not responded to less drastic reforms such as lengthening the school year or creating school-based decision making teams that are granted limited autonomy from state regulations.

Actually, charter schools are the outgrowth of three factors—"the recognition that all children can learn, but not in the same way and at the same rate; the desire to have schools become more flexible and malleable to meet the needs of students instead of students meeting the needs of the school; and the polarizing effects of school voucher

proposals," says Mark Weston of the Education Commission of the States.

It is true that charter school laws have received bipartisan support uncommon in debates over vouchers where state funding goes directly to families to use as they see fit in the education of their children—in or outside of the public school system.

"With vouchers, opponents like the teachers' unions were coming off the walls," says Ohio Senator Cooper Snyder. Ohio passed the nation's second school voucher bill this year after much

struggle. In the meantime, Snyder sponsored charter school legislation to complement, or back up, the private school choice option. "We cannot succeed by constantly trying to change an entrenched system," he says. "We can succeed by empowering parents, teachers and community leaders through community [charter] schools."

Charter schools do appear to have that capacity. Many parents—particularly those from low-income neighborhoods—are intimidated by the layers of bureaucracy inherent in the current system. Charter schools eliminate the distance between the parent and the school's decision makers and often require parental input before certain decisions (the hiring of a principal, for instance) can be made. Parents may feel more empowered, more eager and generally more able to participate in their child's education at these schools.

THE STATE POLICY PROBLEM

More than a decade after *A Nation at Risk* broadsided American public education, legislatures are still seeking ways to improve schooling in this country. Change has been slow, particularly for inner-city schools where children arguably need the most assistance. In urban Cleveland schools, 30 percent of the high school seniors can't pass a ninth grade proficiency test; 65 percent of all students who started school as freshmen three years ago have dropped out, according to Ted Kolderie of the Minnesota Center for Policy Studies, known as the guru of the

ELEMENTS OF STRONG CHARTER LAWS



| | AZ | MI | DE | NH | MA | TX | CA | MN | CO | LA | WI | HI | WY | NM | RI | GA | KS | AR | AK | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Sponsor other than local school board available (Or) appeals process exists | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | X | X | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Anyone can organize a charter | X | X | X | X | X | | X | | X | X | X | | X | | | | | | X | |
| Automatic exemption from state rules and local policies | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | • | X | | | | | | | | |
| School has complete control of funds | X | X | X | X | X | X | ** | X | # | X | | X | | | | | | | | |
| Teachers are employees of the school, not the district; (Or) charter determines legal autonomy | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | # | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| No limits or very high limits on the number of charter schools | X | X | X | X | | | | | X | | X | X | X | | | X | | | X | |
| Allows noncertified teachers | X | + | • | X | X | X | X | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Total "stronger" components</i> | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Stronger charter school laws tend to challenge the status quo of the traditional education system and theoretically may lead to more options for students. The first component of these laws—availability of a sponsor other than the local school board or an appeal process—is considered vital to getting charter schools started.

- In Michigan, certification is not required in university-run charter schools.
- In Delaware, 35 percent of a charter staff can be noncertified.
- Based on an open enrollment portion of Texas charter law. Eligible organizers must be public or private higher education institutions, a nonprofit or a government entity.
- ** Autonomy must be outlined in a school's charter.
- # Legally, Colorado charter schools remain part of the local district. In practice, they are operating autonomously.
- In Wisconsin, charter schools are automatically exempt from most state laws, but not from local board policies.

Source: Johann A. Berlein, Education Consultant

charter school movement.

Kolderie contends that the education system in most states is designed to fail. "The states have created a deal where the school district is assured of everything it wants. It's the only learning company in town. Money comes in from the state; mandatory attendance ensures that it will have the kids; and districting rules make sure it has a monopoly."

Therefore, Kolderie says, when the legislature starts talking about "doing hard things, about reform, about making changes" schools have no compelling reason to comply. "The customers, jobs and security are all there anyway."

But "the superintendents, the school

boards, the administrators didn't create the problem," he emphasizes. "The legislature built it, and the legislature can change it."

Representative Kelso, a former school board member, observes that there have been local school boards that have "changed the way they functioned because of a charter school in the district or a proposal for a charter school." One example involves a school board that consistently denied requests for the addition of a public Montessori school within the district. When members of the community decided to seek a charter for the school, the board reversed its decision and accepted the school as part of the regular system.

CHANGING THE GAME

A school system can't take its customers for granted when alternatives are offered. "Charter schools are breaking up the monopoly," Kelso says. "They are a source of competition." This is particularly true in school districts where many families can't afford private schools.

The hope is that by inserting free market conditions into the system, even in a limited fashion, the behavior and attitudes of public school administrators and staff will change. "It makes the district more amenable to proposals of change from teachers and parents," Kolderie says.

But change brings risk, many good teachers and administrators contend. "Charter schools are a big change in the traditional arrangements," Kolderie points out. "Everybody's starting point is 'no way,' and most people are very uncomfortable with changes in the system."

Patterns in the granting of charters prove this contention true. In states where local boards are the only entity that OKs charters and where there is no avenue for appeal, very few charters have been granted. Evidence in California has shown that district administrators and school boards are least supportive of charter schools that seek the most independence. States that allow a number of avenues for charter approval, on

THE OPPONENTS

People oppose charters for different reasons, depending on their position in the system. Some superintendents oppose charters, viewing them as an insult—an assertion that they are not doing a good job as educators. School boards seem to resent the loss of control. Teachers' concerns center on the fact that charters can be established to sidestep collective bargaining, tenure or certification requirements. In three states, teacher certification is not required, but employee qualifications must be specified in the charter.

Union attitudes, Kolderie says, are shaped by the image of teachers as employees. "But it's now beginning to dawn on people that

firestorm resulted. But, so far, many of the scenarios laid out by critics appear invalid. "There are groups that would like to see the Minnesota charter school movement fail," Kelso admits. "But many of the original fears have proved unfounded."

Much of the intense opposition she saw when the proposal was broached four years ago has "all but disappeared."

The schools have not drained top faculty and students from public schools. (In California, Colorado, Kansas and Wisconsin, charter schools that target students at risk of school failure receive preference for approval.) And four years later, people have stopped worrying that charter schools were



Senator Elliot Schewel
Virginia



Representative Becky Kelso
Minnesota



Senator Cooper Smider
Ohio



Representative Joe Tedder
Florida

the other hand, have yielded more charter schools. In Michigan, if a charter request is denied by the local district, organizers can go to the state or a university for sponsorship. Another option is to put the proposal on a school district election ballot.

"The idea is to free up charters from state laws and regulations. But in most instances, the biggest obstacles are at the local level," explains former California Senator Gary K. Hart, who wrote the state's charter legislation in 1992. "The district is unwilling to give charter schools autonomy. There are sometimes endless, sometimes frustrating numbers of hassles, between the charter and the district office."

Florida Representative Joe Tedder, whose original charter legislation was doomed by a Senate and House scrap over the state's Omnibus Education Bill to which it was attached, says that the bill he will reintroduce this session "provides leverage [through an appeals process] so that a school board must consider a good educational program." Wisconsin amended its charter school law last session, adding an appeal process to counter what was perceived as a lack of cooperation by local boards.

teachers can own learning programs and can contract with a district to supply such things as math or history. They also have the option to work with colleagues as a group, as partners in the education a school offers."

"Charter schools are run by the employees," Kelso explains. "The employer-employee setup that collective bargaining and negotiations are based on is not there. It's a departure from the old 'school board as employer.'"

Not all state legislators are sold on the idea, either. In Virginia, charter legislation proposed by the new governor never got out of committee. Instead, a joint House and Senate study commission is meeting now. Senator Elliot Schewel, who proposed the study resolution, thinks that changes in the fundamental structure of school operations may lead to constitutional problems. If Virginia moves ahead with charter schools, he favors "a trial period for two or three pilot projects to see how they work."

COUNTERING THE CRITICS

When charter school legislation was originally posed in Minnesota, Kelso says a

the first step to a voucher system. They are not, Kelso says, private schools receiving tax money. "The public schools in Minnesota are healthy and strong enough to withstand competition from charters. Charter schools are not threatening the quality of public education, they are enhancing it."

FUTURE OR FAD?

Charter schools do offer a new model of autonomous public schools that provides opportunities for diverse and innovative approaches to education. Yet if the political conflicts inherent in today's education policy debates lead to watered-down laws that provide limited autonomy, charter schools may fail.

Much depends on the will of lawmakers to insist on real change in the education system. Cooperation from state and local board members is another major factor. With a strong base of support, states like Minnesota have weathered opposition. As Representative Kelso notes, "If acceptance is a measure of success, charter schools have been successful. The opposition that was really intense four years ago has melted away." ■

State Trends

Critical Issues, Emerging Trends and Best Practices in State Government

The Council of State Governments

Winter 1997 • Volume 3 • Issue 1

EDUCATION REFORM:

A Charter For Success?

Why can't Johnny read? Every year it seems that the American public hears disturbing reports about the state of the country's educational system. The frustration with the status quo has promoted interest in charter schools. However, the success of charter schools depends on their autonomy, funding and accountability. Various forces resist the charter movement, and their influence often dictates the success or failure of charter-school laws.

Charter schools are independent public schools that operate on the basis of a charter (contract) between groups that organize the school (parents, teachers or social groups) and the group that sponsors the school (local, county or state schools boards). The charter specifies such items as the educational plan for the school, specific educational outcomes and how they will be measured, the management plan for the school, and how the school will comply with other stated requirements. In other words, charter schools, while receiving public funding, opt out of the cookie-cutter regulations that govern the local schools in favor of site-based control. The challenge to charter schools is to prove that they can succeed in reaching students with fresh, innovative techniques not used in regular schools.

Issues for lawmakers regarding state charter-school laws:

- Is the charter school independent of the local school district?
- How are schools held accountable for student performance?
- Can existing schools convert to charter schools?

• How are charter schools funded?

In 1991, Minnesota was the first state to pass legislation authorizing school districts to sponsor charter schools. At press time, 25 states have passed similar legislation, with more than 480 charter schools now in operation. But a closer



Independent public schools are increasingly viewed as the solution for improving student performance and encouraging accountability.

look at the legislation in these states shows that not all charter schools are created equally.

A Matter of Autonomy

"Autonomy is the key issue that separates a charter school from a typical public school," said Neal Dickert Jr., a researcher in the Department of Education at Dartmouth College. Autonomy occurs in various areas of charter school activity, and states have dealt with different aspects of it in their charter school legislation.

For example, Arizona, California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota generally allow charter schools to be established as nonprofit corporations, making them independent of a local "oversight authority." Other states, such as Georgia, Kansas, New Mexico, and

cont'd on page 2

States That Grant Charter Schools Broad Autonomy:

| State/ Date of Law | #Schools in Operation |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Arizona (1994) | 164 |
| California (1992) | 109 |
| Colorado (1993) | 32 |
| Delaware (1995) | 2 |
| Florida (1996) | 6 |
| Louisiana (1995) | 3 |
| Massachusetts (1993) | 22 |
| Michigan (1993) | 76 |
| Minnesota (1991) | 19 |
| New Jersey (1996) | 0 |
| North Carolina (1996) | 0 |
| Texas (1995) | 161 |
| Total | 449 |

States That Grant Charter Schools Little Autonomy:

| State/ Date of Law | #Schools in Operation |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Alaska (1995) | 3 |
| Arkansas (1995) | 0 |
| Connecticut (1996) | 0 |
| Georgia (1993) | 10 |
| Hawaii (1994) | 2 |
| Illinois (1996) | 1 |
| Kansas (1994) | 0 |
| New Mexico (1993) | 5 |
| New Hampshire (1995) | 0 |
| Rhode Island (1995) | 0 |
| South Carolina (1996) | 0 |
| Wisconsin (1993) | 9 |
| Wyoming (1995) | 0 |
| Total | 30 |

Source: Education Commission of the States, February 1996; The Center for Education Reform, November 1996

* Washington, D.C. passed a strong charter school law in 1996. One school is in operation.



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A Charter for Success?

from page 1

Wisconsin, give local school boards control over charter schools. Perhaps not so coincidentally, these states have minimal charter school activity.

Of the 25 state charter school laws, 12 grant autonomy and 13 are restrictive. Yet, 94 percent of charter schools are located in the states allowing broad autonomy. Why is the climate for the creation of charter schools,

acknowledged by public policy experts as "one of the most dynamic educational reform initiatives of the '90s," so different from state to state?

The answer lies in the processes and actors involved in charter school legislation. Local politics and teachers' unions factor in shaping a state's charter school law. In general, states that grant broad authority to charter schools have had strong bipartisan legislative coalitions that have resisted influence from outside pressure groups. States with weak laws have resulted from broad coalitions of teachers' unions and partisan groups that have watered-down the legislation to the point of it being ineffectual.

United They Stand

Teachers' unions have been most resistant to the charter school movement. On the national level, the National Education

Association now endorses the charter school concept. In April 1996, National Education Association President Keith Geiger announced a \$1.5 million initiative to create five charter schools in five cities. But its grass-roots affiliates have

fought against strong charter school laws.

"The best-case scenario would have unions supporting charter schools in their truest sense: schools that are autonomous, flexible, innovative, and easily started because they are free from collective bargaining and various regulatory constraints," said Jeanne Allen, president of the nonprofit Center for Education Reform. However, most proponents of charter schools see union support for schools that are "charter" in name only: Union regulations and conditions make them virtually indistinguishable from regular schools. "The NEA, in concert with its state and local chapters and various associations, is notorious for running strong legislation to ground, mauling it, then proudly waving the lifeless, empty carcass as a victory for . . . 'the democratic principles that are public education,'" Allen said.

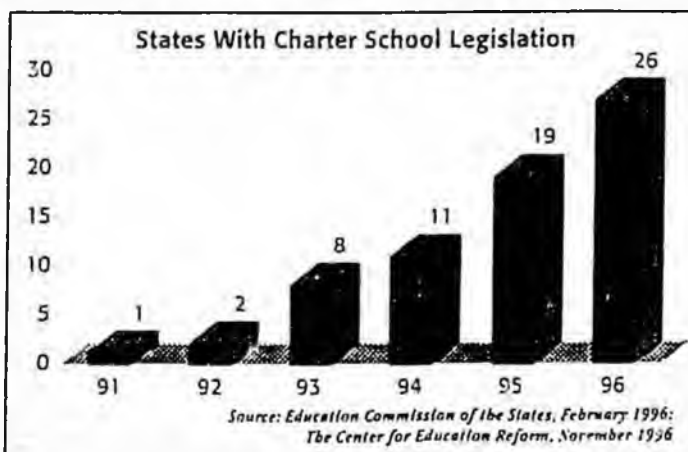
For example, to open a charter school in Arkansas, a state that has strict charter school laws, the following criteria must be met:

1. The charter school must be an existing public school.
2. The teachers' union must approve the deal.

3. The school must remain a part of the district's collective bargaining unit.

Teachers' unions generally point to the Arkansas law as a model for other states. But, this law has resulted in no charter schools to date in Arkansas.

Thus far, only New Jersey has been able to pass a strong charter school law with the blessing of the state NEA affiliate. In 1996, Gov. Christine Todd Whitman and the state legislature were committed to the passage of a strong law, and the New Jersey Education Association said it felt that it was better to join than fight. The NJEA won a few significant concessions effecting the law's impact, with the most significant provisions regarding collective bargaining arrangements for converted public schools. Also, the New Jersey law prohibits private firms from making any profit if they choose to contract with a charter school. But, the united front put up by the



governor and the legislature permitted passage of a strong law.

Tradition Dies Hard

In a few states, charter-school laws have been ineffective due to local traditions and politics. In New Hampshire, the charter-school law requires a town-meeting vote to activate the program. This is proving difficult in a state with small districts, the lowest level of state support for schools in America and a tradition of hostility to state authority, according to Ted Kolderie, senior associate at the Center for Policy Studies and a leading proponent of charter schools.

In Kansas, a strong tradition of local control and respect for school boards have hampered the charter schools effort. Alex Medler, policy analyst for the Education Commission of the States, said that these strong local traditions cause people to defer decision-making to districts who aren't willing to be charter-friendly. States like Kansas, where local districts are powerful, face an uphill struggle to implement charter

State Trends

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State Trends reports on issues critical to state government leaders from state, regional and national perspectives. Drawing from current research, historical data and 50-state surveys, the publication tracks trends and provides timely information on the most creative solutions to problems faced by state governments.

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CSG, the multibranch organization of the states and U.S. territories, champions excellence in state government, works with state leaders across the nation and through its regions to put the best ideas and solutions into practice. To this end, CSG:

- Builds leadership skills to improve decision-making;
- Advocates multistate problem-solving and partnerships;
- Interprets changing national and international conditions to prepare states for the future; and,
- Promotes the sovereignty of the states and their role in the American federal system.



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schools simply because the local boards do not want to cede authority to any other group.

Accountability

All charter schools hold a time-specific charter after which they must either reapply or go through a formal review process. The length of the charter differs from state to state, but generally ranges from three to five years. The charter also specifies how to measure

standards of student performance. If the charter school fails in any measure, its charter may be revoked, which means a cessation of public money.

Conversion

Conversion of public schools to charter schools presents more problems for educators and legislators. In states like Georgia, Louisiana and New Mexico, only existing

If charter schools succeed, they will make it harder for local school districts to ask legislators for increased funding."

Kolderie said that the classification of schools plays a huge role in the funding debate. "The biggest difference in the ways states fund charter schools lies in how states view the schools," he said. "Some states view charter schools as a district unto themselves, albeit without a tax base, while some view them as part of the regular school district."

This subtle distinction has caused controversy among local school districts and the states. If a charter school has no tax base, then the funding must come directly from the state. Since most states split elementary and secondary school funding with the local districts, the schools districts feel that the charter schools are taking state money away from them.

Several states fund charter schools at a rate below regular public schools. Colorado's charter schools are considered part of the local school district and receive 80 percent of the funding level of regular schools. New Jersey law (which takes effect in fall 1997) allows charter schools to be funded at 90 percent of the public schools' level, with the other 10 percent held for six months. If the charter school proves that it needs the extra funds, they are disbursed.

The next few years will be telling for the charter school movement. If test scores prove that charter schools provide better education for our nation's children, the number of charter schools could accelerate dramatically and the states with restrictive law may feel pressure to liberalize them. Likewise, a disappointing performance by charter schools may force legislators to pass restrictive legislation that will stifle the creation of more schools. ➔

Matt Grayson is an Information Specialist with The Council of State Governments.

Autonomy is the key issue that separates a charter school from a typical public school.

- Neal Dickert Jr., researcher, Dept. of Education, Dartmouth College

student performance. Since the charter school movement is in its infancy, comparative data on student achievement is sparse. Nonetheless, some significant student gains have been reported.

Louann Bierlein, education aide to the governor of Louisiana, noted several successes of charter schools:

1. At the City Academy in St. Paul, Minn., 42 graduates (all former dropouts) have been accepted into postsecondary programs.

2. Horizon Instructional Systems, a charter school near Sacramento, Calif., notes that its test scores increased an average of 10 percent compared to the rest of the district.

3. Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles reports that its language arts scores improved from the 9th percentile to the 39th, while its math scores increased from the 14th percentile to the 57th.

However, Bierlein said that she is concerned about "reports which state that a number of charter schools have not developed rigorous performance expectations for students, nor have they specified precisely the methods by which performances are to be measured." She said that while this also may be the case for many public schools, "it is a serious concern for charter schools attempting to 'prove' their worth."

Thomas Mauhs-Pugh of Dartmouth College's Department of Education said that charter schools are held accountable in three important areas:

- Charter schools are responsible for meeting the conditions specified in the charter in terms of providing materials, teaching courses and measuring student performance.
- They must abide by applicable state and federal laws.
- They also are responsible for meeting

public schools may be converted to charter schools. In these states, the creation of charter schools has been minimal because groups that are enthusiastic about charter schools (parents and universities) are shut out of the process.

In New Jersey, the New Jersey Education Association was able to include a clause in the state's charter school law that restricted the number of public schools that could become charter schools. "The NJEA represents all the teachers in a given school and every teacher would not agree to change [to a charter school]," said Steve Weston, aide to state Sen. Jack Ewing. "The NJEA didn't want to change the status quo."

Funding

Another challenge is funding of charter schools. "For years, state education personnel came to the legislature and said 'we need more money for x, y and z,'" Kolderie said. "Charter schools are charged with doing things better than the school districts, in most cases with less resources.

Criteria for Creating Strong Charter Schools from the Education Commission of the States:

- Nonlocal sponsorship is available.
- Individuals or groups from outside the public school system can organize a charter proposal.
- The school receives automatic exemptions from most state laws/rules and local policies.
- The school has fiscal autonomy with complete control over funds generated by its student count (including teacher salaries).
- The charter, not the law, determines the level of legal autonomy. Teachers are employees of the school, not the local district.
- The state places no (or very high) limits on the number of charter schools that can be formed.
- A percentage of noncertified individuals can teach at charter schools without being asked to seek a waiver or alternative certificate.

STEPHANIE PATEL
1545 So. Hoyt #103
Anchorage, AK 99507
338-3579

April 28, 1997

Dear Legislators,

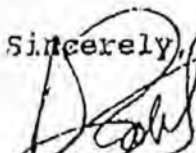
I am the headmaster of Walden Pond Charter School and was the chair of the proposal team for that school. I have a background both as a lawyer and as a teacher/director of a small private school in Alaska. I have been aware of the course of Alaska charter school legislation since its inception. I had been following the course of charter schools outside Alaska prior to that time. I am a founding member of Alaskans for Educational Choice, Inc., which has worked hard to raise public awareness about the role charter schools can play in educational change.

I would like to voice my support for HB 229 and SB 182. The goal to which we are all striving, I believe, is improvement in educational opportunities for Alaskan youth. It has amazed me to see elderly Alaskans who were educated in impoverished little pro-statehood schools that have better literacy skills than their grandchildren, who had the benefit of the wealthy schools of the late seventies and eighties. My children have been in schools in Kenai, Anchorage and Fairbanks, and in each case I felt frustrated with a take-it-or-leave-it educational system. As a result, more and more Alaskans have left it -- for private education or homeschooling. I believe that the problems stem from the institutionalization of education in this state, a condition that disempowers the principal parties in the education triangle: parents, students, teachers. Charter Schools are a breath of fresh air in what has become a rhetoric filled but stagnant educational system.

I support HB 229 and SB 182 because, while a step in the right direction, the present charter school law does not adequately provide for the even and fair-handed development of responsible, well thought out educational programs. There must be flexibility in the system and room for innovation, but there must also be a fair review process. I support a local independent board for charter schools that would be an alternate route (to the local school district) for charter school applications. I believe that there are other changes that would assist in the implementation of strong charter schools, but I think this is a good start.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Patel

Juno e-mail printed Wed, 30 Apr 1997 10:45:29 PST, page 1

From: dktitus@juno.com
 Received: from x2.boston.juno.com (x2.boston.juno.com [205.231.101.21])
 by x18.boston.juno.com (8.6.13/8.7.Alpha.4/1.34.kim) with ESMTTP id CAA035:
 for <linda_sharp@juno.com>; Wed, 30 Apr 1997 02:15:45 -0400
 Received: (from dktitus@juno.com) by x2.boston.juno.com (queuemail)
 id CSU18801; Wed, 30 Apr 1997 02:14:41 EDT
 Return-path: dktitus@juno.com
 To: linda_sharp@juno.com, adent@alaska.net
 Date: Tue, 29 Apr 1997 20:31:34 YST
 Subject: My Letter FYI, I also sent a POM
 Message-ID: <19970429.203146.7831.0.dktitus@juno.com>
 X-Status: Read
 X-Mailer: Juno 1.00
 X-Juno-Line-Breaks: 0-56

From: Dave Titus

To: Gail Phillips

Cc: All Representatives and Senators

I write to you as the principal organizer of the Family Partnership Charter School, the first charter to receive preliminary approval from the Anchorage School Board. I support the proposed changes to provisions of law relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools contained in HB229 and SB182.

I would be among the first to admit that the Anchorage School Board and the ASD administration have become more receptive to the educational initiatives of parents and front line educators since the signing of our charter law in June of 1995. Our own proposal was endorsed by the ASD administration. After two very cooperative work sessions it was approved unanimously by the School Board.

Having said this I must say that I am equally convinced that the intentions of lawmakers who supported our current charter law have been thwarted in large part. AS 14.03.255. (a) (1) states that the charter school

"... is exempt from the local school district's textbook, program, curriculum, and scheduling requirements"

in order to ensure that greater accountability be accompanied by greater autonomy. While variations in scheduling have been allowed where they are not in conflict with existing bus and lunch schedules, curriculum remains firmly under school district control. To confirm that this is the case, one need look no farther than the Anchorage School Board Policy on charter schools No.333.3 (4) which requires the applicant to detail

"The curriculum in each subject matter area of the charter school (including educational/academic goals, program of study,

Juno e-mail printed Wed, 30 Apr 1997 10:45:29 PST, page 2

scope and sequence, instructional methods and materials, and evaluation procedures to be used)".

This textbook, program, and curriculum exemption has not only been defeated in the case of each charter application when proposers were compelled to accept approximations of existing local district standards, its reversal has been pedestalled in Anchorage School Board Policy.

Do not pretend that by going slow and leaving the existing law unchanged you will do justice to its intent. Those who oppose changes to charter legislation characterize charter schools as risky and experimental. Theirs is a strategy of containment. It is designed to preserve power in our failed existing institutions. I urge you to unmask and stand against those who are so determined to protect the "education industry" and the status quo that they will sacrifice the best opportunities for students, parents and front line educators in the process.

PUBLIC OPINION MESSAGE

"Ms.", "Linda", "", "Sharp", "", "PO Box 190051", "", "Anchorage", "AK", "99519", "245-5501", "", "U", "04/21/97", "N", "HB 229", "Supports", "", "MAJORITY MEMBERS CAN YOU HELP MOVE HB 229 ALONG TO APPROVAL? REP. BUNDE IS NOT INTERESTED IN SCHEDULING IN HESS. 229'S A SMALL CONSERVATIVE STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. IT'S GOING TO TAKE 5-10 DIFFERENT BILLS OVER TIME", "TO MAKE ALASKAS'S EDUCATION IMPROVE. WE DON'T NEED MORE MONEY - JUST 229!", "60", "STATE BOARD OF CHARTER SCHOOLS"

PUBLIC OPINION MESSAGE

"Ms.", "Aase", "", "Hynne-Haugen", "", "1350 St Gotthard
Ave", "", "Anchorage", "AK", "99508", "563-6571", "", "U", "04/21/97", "N", "HB
229", "Supports", "", "THE CHARTER SCHOOL IS A NEW AND EXCITING PART
OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUENESS AN
INDEPENDENT BOARD WOULD BE BENEFICIAL IN SETTING GUIDELINES,
CRITERIA AND RULES.", "", "07", "STATE BOARD OF CHARTER SCHOOLS"

**Kelly S. Merrill
3346 Lake Park Circle
Anchorage, AK 99517**

APRIL 30, 1997

**TO: AL Veezy
ATTENTION: RYNNIEVA
Please make 60 copies
and
distribute to
ALL LEGISLATORS
and
MIKE BOOTS**

THANK YOU

NOTE: This is a cover for a one-page letter which will follow.

**Distributed by: Representative Al Vezey
State Capitol, Room 13
465-3719**

April 30, 1997

To: All Legislators

I write in support of HB229/SB182 I live in Anchorage and work as a professional engineer. My reason for support is a result of my close observation of the charter school process on the local level. I watched charter school proposers in Anchorage spend hundreds of hours drafting, editing, and reworking their proposal to meet with local school board approval and be true to the spirit of their charter school philosophy.

When they were disapproved at the first school board meeting, they worked diligently to comply with all requests and solve all problems, until only two issues remained--issues exempt under charter school law. Yet, the charter school was disapproved again. I feel disapproval was perhaps the result of personal bias and/or agendas.

You may have heard from ASD superintendent Bob Cristal urging you not to support HB229/SB182. I ask you to consider a superintendent's motives. It seems to me, he may feel he has something to lose by approving charter schools. He might feel he would have less control in his district. Is this a reason to vote against HB229/SB182? I think not.

WE NEED a local independent charter school board who could listen objectively and approve or disapprove charters based on whether or not they would educate children, not whether they fit someone's personal agenda or bias.

The FIRST GOAL of education should be to effectively educate children. Charter schools will meet this goal, or their charter would be revoked. That's a level of accountability not matched in public schools at this time.

PLEASE GIVE CHARTER SCHOOLS A CHANCE TO EFFECTIVELY EDUCATE THE CHILDREN OF ALASKA. VOTE YES ON HB229/SB182.

Thank you,

*Author: titus@Alaska.NET at C _HS1
Date: 4/29/97 9:54 PM
Priority: Normal
TO: Representative Al Vezey at LAA_TRANS
Subject: (no subject)
From: Dave Titus

To: Gail Phillips

Cc: All Representatives and Senators

I write to you as the principal organizer of the Family Partnership Charter School, the first charter to receive preliminary approval from the Anchorage School Board. I support the proposed changes to provisions of law relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools contained in HB229 and SB182.

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Having said this I must say that I am equally convinced that the intentions of lawmakers who supported our current charter law have been thwarted in large part. AS 14.03.255. (a) (1) states that the charter school

"... is exempt from the local school district's textbook, program, curriculum, and scheduling requirements"

in order to ensure that greater accountability be accompanied by greater autonomy. While variations in scheduling have been allowed where they are not in conflict with existing bus and lunch schedules, curriculum remains firmly under school district control. To confirm that this is the case, one need look no farther than the Anchorage School Board Policy on charter schools No.333.3 (4) which requires the applicant to detail

"The curriculum in each subject matter area of the charter school (including educational/academic goals, program of study, scope and sequence, instructional methods and materials, and evaluation procedures to be used)".

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Do not pretend that by going slow and leaving the existing law unchanged you will do justice to its intent. Those who oppose changes to charter legislation characterize charter schools as risky and experimental. Theirs is a strategy of containment. It is designed to preserve power in our failed existing institutions. I urge you to unmask and stand against those who are so determined to protect the "education industry" and the status quo that they will sacrifice the best opportunities for students, parents and front line educators in the process.

PUBLIC OPINION MESSAGES 4/29/97

CHARTER SCHOOLS

"Ms.", "Rebecca", "", "Huggins", "", "PO Box
878115", "", "Wasilla", "AK", "99687", "373-
6419", "", "U", "04/29/97", "N", "HB 229", "Amend", "", "ON SECTION 2,
PARAGRAPH ON SPECIFIC LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT; ADD IN
'OR PROFICIENCY LEVEL.' AS AN EXAMPLE, OUR CHARTER
SCHOOL IS A MULTI-AGE AND NOT TRADITIONAL GRADE
LEVELS. ADD IN, 'THAT IT PUTS IT IN LINE,' ON SECTION 4,", "1
AND 2.", "07", "STATE BOARD OF CHARTER SCHOOLS"

"Mr.", "David", "K", "Titus", "", "14307 Golden View
Dr", "", "Anchorage", "AK", "99516", "264-
3746", "", "Y", "04/29/97", "N", "HB 229", "Supports", "", "ALSO SB 182.
THE CURRENT LAW HAS FAILED. CHANGES ARE NEEDED TO
SECURE THE TEXTBOOK, PROGRAM, AND CURRICULUM
EXEMPTION. IF YOU OPPOSE THESE CHANGES IT WILL BE
SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO PROTECT THE 'EDUCATION
INDUSTRY' AND", "THE STATUS QUO AT THE EXPENSE OF
OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND FRONT-LINE
EDUCATORS.", "60", "STATE BOARD OF CHARTER SCHOOLS"

PUBLIC OPINION MESSAGES

"Rev.", "William", "", "Greene", "", "7310 E 17th
Ave", "", "Anchorage", "AK", "99504", "337-
3016", "", "Y", "04/28/97", "N", "HB 229", "Supports", "", "I AM IN FULL
SUPPORT OF HB 229 AND SB 182. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE
HOUSE AND SENATE PASS THESE BILLS. EVERYONE I HAVE
TALKED WITH INDICATED THEY WANT THESE BILLS
PASSED.", "", "60", "STATE BOARD OF CHARTER SCHOOLS"

DOIS D. DALLAS

April 21, 1997

Dear Alaska Legislators:

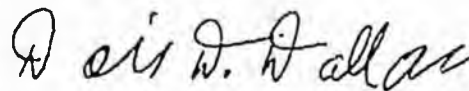
I am retired from parallel careers in education and petroleum engineering. I have six grandchildren, all living in Alaska. The youngest will not enter high school until the year 2007.

I hope you will support and pass HB-229, the charter school upgrade bill.

It is understandable that some school superintendents would be skeptical of, or outright opposed to, this bill. Some of the decisions regarding educational choice, outside the core area, will naturally be shifted to the parents and teachers of the charter school students. In my opinion, this is as it should be. An independent charter school board and the higher requirements for goals and testing are necessary if this new educational concept is going to have a chance to demonstrate its potential.

Please vote for HB-229 and pass it this year.

Sincerely,



Dois D. Dallas
450 Sun Way
Fairbanks, AK 99709
Telephone 479-3365

Author: akmont@Alaska.NET (Kathy Monterrosa) at CC2MHS1

Date: 4/11/97 2:30 PM

Priority: Normal

TO: Representative Al Vezey at LAA_TRANS

Subject: Re: Independent Charter School Board

Kathy Monterrosa wrote:

>

> Dear Representative Vezey:

>

> As an advocate for charter schools in Alaska, and particularly in
> Anchorage, we followed closely the approval process for one charter
> school, The Village Charter School, during the months of November
> through March of the '96-97 school year. We were able to meet with
> its creator, Mrs. Linda Sharp, on several occasions and were very
> impressed with the school program and curriculum offerings. We are
> currently retired elementary teachers from the Anchorage School
> District having taught and counseled in grades kindergarten through
> sixth grades in the regular education program and the Spanish
> Immersion program. Since Linda's school would include the learning of
> the Spanish language as part of her curriculum, she called upon us for
> input into that part of the curriculum. We were very surprised that
> her school was not approved by the Anchorage School Board on the
> recommendation of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.

>

> As a result, we feel that the current "Charter School Law" should be
> reviewed, and that an independent school board be appointed by the
> Department of Education which would be non-partisan in order to
> determine the worth of future charter schools. These schools should
> have autonomy if they're going to be able to function as charter
> schools, yet should be accountable to state standards and requirements
> for graduation. Until then, the future of charter schools may be held
> up by the particular district's approval process.

>

> We are hopeful that Mrs. Sharp will try again for approval for next
> year since only three schools have been approved out of Anchorage's
> allotment of ten. And we would hope that you will introduce a bill in
> this legislative session that would amend the current Charter School
> Law.

>

> Thank you for your attention.

>

> Kathleen and Alexander Monterrosa
> 4310 Gannett Circle
> Anchorage, AK 99504



RapidFax

APR 10 1997

*This Fax was sent using FAXcilitate
The Premier Fax Software for the Apple Macintosh™*

To: HB229 Dolores Uhl, - Legislature/HB229

From: Dede Uhl, N/A

Fax Phone Number: 1-907-248-1452

Date: Thu, Apr 10, 1997 • 10:14 AM

Transmitting (1) pages, including cover sheet.

If there is difficulty with this transmission, please call: 907-248-1452

Note:

Please support HB229. I would like to see an independent review board created to approve charter schools and to handle appeals.

Also I favor clarifying funding so that local money can be shared equally among all students, whether in charter schools or alternative.

Thank you,

Dolores Uhl

April 9, 1994

Memo to: Rynniewa Moss FAX 465-3258
From: Linda Sharp Tel 245-5501 Fax 245-5502
RE: HB-229 and HB 158

Good news Representative Dyson will co-sponsor HB-229 with Representative Vezey. I just spoke with him this evening.

Joe Green indicated to me in December that he is very friendly to this kind of bill and would co-sponsor. I spoke with his Aide, Christy today, but have not been able to reconfirm with Rep. Green yet. Perhaps you'll have some luck with him tomorrow. Brian Porter sent his Aide to some of our charter school law revision meetings last year, and the indication was that he is also supportive. I believe you can get him to co-sign tomorrow. And I believe that Alan Kemplen is supportive, as his children have attended a public alternative in Anchorage that is the most heavily wait-listed in the city. He also told me last year that he supports improving charter school law. Tom Brice supported SB-88 when it was passed two years ago, and hopefully he's heard from Fairbanks supporters.

Also, Rep. Dyson needs assistance with HB-158, which would basically get Anchorage doing what Fairbanks is already doing ... allowing private school children and home school children to enroll in our public schools on a part-time basis. Of course, partial funding naturally follows, so that did not need to be in his bill. I hope Al is supportive of Representative Dyson's bill. I think it's a very good bill, and overdue in Anchorage.

Alaskans for Educational Choice meet Thursday at 5:00. We'll be asking people for more help then. Let's talk mid-afternoon so I can catch up on any suggestions you have. Thank you,

Linda

Author: linda_sharp@jurcom (Linda J. Sharp) at CC2MHS1

Date: 4/8/97 3:49 AM

Priority: Normal

TO: Representative Al Vezey at LAA_TRANS

CC: adent@alaska.net at CC2MHS1, dktitus@juno.com at CC2MHS1, nancys@alaska.net at C
dddallas@polarnet.com at CC2MHS1, empire@alaska.net at CC2MHS1,
casler@alaska.net at CC2MHS1, edcinc@alaska.net at CC2MHS1,
mddallas@ucdavis.edu at CC2MHS1

Subject: Charter Schools

Dear Al and Rynniva,

We were excited to get a copy of HB-229! Yeah! It is now a bill, not just a draft. This has been anticipated since before SB-88 became a law, because the independent Board for Charter Schools is the single most important element of developing strong and successful charter schools.

Please call Mike Boots (276-1558) and me (245-5501) any time, with suggestions of what we can do. Leave a message on our voice mails if we are out. Have you had any luck getting House HESS members to co-sponsor?

I think that would be a good first step. considering the Chair may oppose even calendaring it. We found that to be the case in 1995: Con Bunde refused to even schedule SB-88 for a hearing on the floor of the House. If

it had not been for the fact that Cynthia Toohey was my representative, it may never have even gotten scheduled. On the floor of House HESS, Con Bunde was the only testimony opposing Charter Schools (best and brightest teachers and kids all go there, leaving the other schools as dumping ground was his reason).

You have both put a lot of work into making this a good bill, and we really appreciate your dedication to it. Mike Boots is prepared to come to Juneau April 20 for a few days to help get it passed. I found in 1995 that walking around the halls of the legislature, speaking with aides and Legislators, was quite helpful. A no cost, competition and quality issue like this has appeal to many Legislators.

Thanks again, and let us know what and when we can do to help.

Linda Sharp Tel. 245-5501 FAX 245-5502

POMS

"Ms.", "Cynthia", "", "Shilling", "", "PO Box 83744", "", "Fairbanks", "AK",
"99708", "479-8214", "", "Y", "04/10/97", "N", "HB 229", "Supports", "",
"I STRONGLY SUPPORT THIS BILL FOR AN INDEPENDENT BOARD
FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS. IT MAKES SENSE TO HAVE A BOARD
OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO BE MAKING DECISIONS
FOR THE CHARTER SCHOOLS SINCE THEY ARE INDEPENDENT
FROM THE", "SCHOOL DISTRICT.", "60", "STATE BOARD OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS"

April 8, 1997

Dear Representative Vezey and Legislators,

I am happy to hear that HB-229 has been introduced. I hope you will pass it this year. I will help you any way I can.

I worked to support SB-88 two years ago, because I felt that a "weak" charter school law was better than none. However, what I have seen this past year is that the approval process is fatally flawed. School Board Members who are not accustomed to "holding schools accountable for educating students" will allow charters to be approved without any goals for what students should learn, nor the tests to measure how well those goals have been achieved. In addition, School Boards unnecessarily run charter proposers around in circles on issues that SB-88 exempts, such as textbook and curriculum. This process will only generate a new variety of schools waffling in mediocrity. Items needing improving in this process include:

- 1. We need an independent Board for Charter Schools.** "GM should not be required to take its latest design to Ford for approval", metaphorically speaking. This is the case when charter proposals must gain School Board approval to be implemented.
- 2. The funding for charter students should be the same as any District student.** Charters must serve every entitlement program; and everyone from janitors to teachers remain in the unions. Charter students should not be funded as second-class students.
- 3. Housing must be provided to charter schools.** Founders and teachers should not be forced into real estate ventures, which pose financial and conflict of interest burdens.

My experience, speaking with the seven different proposal groups that officially wrote letters of intent to propose charter schools here in Anchorage in '96, and several others in the rest of Alaska, is that the approval process is the single most important change we can make. In addition to chairing one of four proposals in Anchorage that were allowed to go to a final vote, I attended School Board meetings and purchased videos of official meetings. My observations include:

- 1. Goals for educating students at every grade level every year, and the tests to measure how those goals were met,** were overlooked. In some cases, no goals at all were set. Tests don't matter if there were no goals for educating!
- 2. The dollars in the classroom versus intent to purchase, lease or rent space was not a serious concern. Keeping class size small, with dollars in the classroom will increase a student's chances of being well-educated.**

Please join Representative Vezey in getting HB-229 passed. Approximately 40% of the schools in Alaska are waffling in mediocrity, if test scores tell the story. As a substitute teacher, I see this first hand. We desperately need a more independent, objective board to review and approve or deny charter school applications which will hold charter schools accountable for educating students. Thank you.



Linda J. Sharp
P.O. Box 19-0051
Anchorage, AK 99519-0051
907-245-5501 FAX 907-245-5502

Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.



4/7/97

Dear Mr. Veazy;

In regard to House Bill
#229.

I regards to Charter Schools
I feel the funding needs
to be clarified.

I feel we need an inde-
pendant Charter School Board.

I feel that Charter School
Students and Anchorage School
District Students need to receive
the same amount of funding

Sincerely;

Constance Lea Anderson

STEPHANIE PATEL
1545 So. Hoyt, #103
Anchorage, AK 99514
907-338-3579

To: Al Veazy
Fax No. 1-907-465-3258
Date: April 7, 1997

Dear Mr. Veazy,

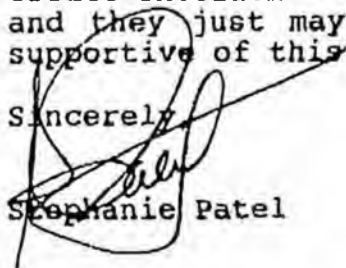
I am the headmaster of Walden Pond Charter School (and was the chair and primary architect of the proposal). Walden Pond is a junior-senior high school for students who are falling through the cracks. Our school was approved by the Anchorage School District on February 10, 1997. Over 150 students have so far filed applications to attend our school (we can take 130 students).

I am very familiar with the present legislation, the proposed changes to the legislation, and the efforts of Alaskans for Educational Choice, Inc., of which I am a board member. I have been an attorney in Alaska since 1980 and am a teacher. I have had little time to provide direct input regarding the changes I think should be made to the present legislation, as almost all my energy has been dedicated to the considerable task of actually opening the doors to our school. However, I do have a basis in experience and study for my concern that the present law is inadequate.

I do want to make it known at this time that (1) I believe the creation of an independent state-wide charter school board to be essential -- to give the process credibility, consistency and accessibility; (2) that funding requirements need to be clarified to make funding consistent state-wide and to make it equitable locally.

People want charter schools. They are the opportunity to create excellence in our schools. They won't ruin public education and they just may save it. We need to make the law fair and supportive of this very viable movement.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Patel

STEPHANIE PATEL
1545 So. Hoyt #103
Anchorage, AK 99507
338-3579

April 28, 1997

Dear Legislators,

I am the headmaster of Walden Pond Charter School and was the chair of the proposal team for that school. I have a background both as a lawyer and as a teacher/director of a small private school in Alaska. I have been aware of the course of Alaska charter school legislation since its inception. I had been following the course of charter schools outside Alaska prior to that time. I am a founding member of Alaskans for Educational Choice, Inc., which has worked hard to raise public awareness about the role charter schools can play in educational change.

I would like to voice my support for HB 229 and SB 182. The goal to which we are all striving, I believe, is improvement in educational opportunities for Alaskan youth. It has amazed me to see elderly Alaskans who were educated in impoverished little pre-Statehood schools that have better literacy skills than their grandchildren, who had the benefit of the wealthy schools of the late seventies and eighties. My children have been in schools in Kenai, Anchorage and Fairbanks, and in each case I felt frustrated with a take it-or-leave it educational system. As a result, more and more Alaskans have left it -- for private education or homeschooling. I believe that the problems stem from the institutionalization of education in this state, a condition that disempowers the principal parties in the education triangle: parents, students, teachers. Charter Schools are a breath of fresh air in what has become a rhetoric filled but stagnant educational system.

I support HB 229 and SB 182 because, while a step in the right direction, the present charter school law does not adequately provide for the even and fair-handed development of responsible, well thought out educational programs. There MUST be flexibility in the system and room for innovation, but there must also be a fair review process. I support a local independent board for charter schools that would be an alternate route (to the local school district) for charter school applications. I believe that there are other changes that would assist in the implementation of strong charter schools, but I think this is a good start.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,


Stephanie Patel

APR 07 1997
Fax: 465-3258

To Al Vesey,
Re: Charter School Legislation

Please note my support for HB 229. In order to ensure a fair approval process, we need a separate approval process from the local school board. To ensure a maximum level of competition we need to do away with any restrictions on the maximum number of schools allowed statewide. I would like you to note that the states that have these provisions have had the greatest success with the implementation of charter schools.

The purpose of the secondary approval processes is to ensure that the education community does not force a one size fits all system on the community at large. As long as the charter schools are accountable to their goals, and these goals exceed those set by the school district as a whole, then the public trust for money being well spent has been fulfilled.

On a personal note, I have been one of a few key members involved in the approval of the Family Partnership Charter School in the Anchorage School District. We initially gave up Scope and Sequence to the school district based on various indications from the administration. We had to give up local funding, housing, transportation and an innumerable number of minor concessions during various administrative and school board meetings. Our charter passed but, along with the rest of the charters approved in the ASD, are in desperate shape because of the non-support from the school district by way of funding, services, housing, as well as excessive administrative overhead.

HB 229 responds specifically to the unfortunate facts about the process that resulted in the previous observations. The process to pass a charter school at this point will likely not be tested by any other groups outside of those sponsored by the administration or by teachers specifically. Only they have enough of a monetary risk to put in the thousands of hours of time to ensure passage. Only groups directly sponsored by the administration and the union will know how to grease the skids. The process adopted by the ASD board has been an unnecessary burden in order to ensure the proper expenditure of public funds.

In the end, all of the existing charter schools may fail. If they do it will be because of the failure of the charter school legislation to ensure equal representation for charter students. Charter school students are denied equal representation of monetary resources, public services, and public facilities. The depth of this failure for legislative guarantee of our constitutional right to equal access to public education also leads to both the possibility, and in the case of Charter Schools the certainty, of a lack of equal protection for the success of Charter School students. In the end aren't these two rights one in the same?

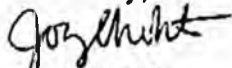
Please support HB 229, and please also pass laws to ensure our equal representation for access to public education.

Thank You,
Glen M. Biegel, academic policy committee member, Family Partnership Charter School

Mr. Al Vezey:

I am in support of House Bill 229 (charter schools) and commend you for your efforts concerning this issue. There is a tremendous need for an independent charter school review board that understands the concept of charter schools and can approve them based on a set of objective guidelines. The reviewing and approving of charter schools needs to be removed from the competitive atmosphere that now exists in the present system. Another important concern is the inequality of funding for charter schools versus the traditional school system. Charter schools deserve local funding that equals the traditional school system, after all they are public schools and our taxes are being collected to fund public schools. I strongly support the right of parents to ~~choose~~ choose the most appropriate education for their children.

Sincerely,



Jody Roberts

331 S. Bragaw

Anchorage, AK 99508

1-907-338-2178



Kenneth Brewster
201 Heintzleman Drive
Anchorage, AK 99503-2034

Fax Phone Number:

(907) 274-8149

Voice Phone Number:

(907) 274-8149

To:

Al Uesey
Alaska State House of Representatives

Fax Phone Number:

1-907-465-3258

Voice Phone Number:

Number of Pages:

2

Date:

4/7/97-3:11:55 PM

Subject:

Print

Notes:

201 Heintzleman Drive
Anchorage, AK 99503-2034
Monday, April 7, 1997

Memorandum

To: Rep. Al Vesey
From: Kenneth Brewster
Subject: HB 229

Please submit the aforementioned bill with provisions making it clear that charter schools must receive at least the same local funding as all other public schools in the same school district. Thank you.



WALDEN POND CH. . IER SCHOOL
P.O. Box 140693
Anchorage, AK 99514-0693

APR 07 1997

To: Al Veazy

From: Pam Beckford

Date: 4/7/97

Message:

Establish an independent board for Charter Schools and clarify the funding issues that are problematic for the front-line educators. If you need more information call me at 345-7731 or write: 16840 Tide View Drive, Anch 99516. Charter Schools need your support

Pam

Author: Titus@Alaska.NET ("ENSTAR Natural Gas Operat' rs") at CC2MHS1
Date: 4/7/97 12:57 PM
Priority: Normal
TO: Representative Al Vezey at LAA_TRANS
Subject: HB 299
Representative Vezey,

I am writing in support of HB 229. As one of the principal organizers of the Family Partnership Charter School which has received preliminary approval, I have seen firsthand how the existing charter school application process is likely to discourage the sort of innovation that Alaska's Charter Law was intended to create.

The existing law specifically exempts charter organizers from local school district's textbook, program, curriculum, and scheduling requirements. The Anchorage School Board has effectively preserved these requirements in most cases by insisting on so much detail that alternatives could not be approved. Scheduling alternatives have fallen victim to pressure from existing bus schedules and negotiated agreements. The local board does not and may never understand that GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY WARRANTS GREATER AUTONOMY.

Dave Titus

Author: "jbean@alaska.net"@Alaska.NET (Sandy Cannon) at CC2MHS1
Date: 4/6/97 8:01 AM
Priority: Normal
TO: Representative Al Vezey at LAA_TRANS
Subject: HB 229

I am encouraging you to go forward with H.B. 229. Charter
Schools do not need to be approved by the local School board, but an
independant board.

Also...please work to ensure all students receive EQUAL funding.
Charter students should receive the same funding as all other students.
Thank you very much for your support!

4/6/17

To: Rep. Al Vezev

FROM: Leo C. Albert Ed.D
3624 Carleton Ave.,
Anchorage, AK. 99517

RE: Charter School Bill

Dear Rep. Vezev:

I totally support your bill whereby an independent board be created for the approval of any Charter School contract in the state of Alaska. Doing this would initiate more professionalism and eliminate "local-structured" policies.

Sincerely,

Leo C. Albert Ed.D.

Author: nancys@Alaska.NET (Nancy Schierhorn) at CC2MHS1

Date: 4/2/97 9:01 PM

Priority: Normal

TO: Representative Al Vezey at LAA_TRANS

Subject: Charter School legislation

Thank you for the support you have already given to the charter school legislative amendments. I have been very active with charter school issues for the last year and a half, and am a board member of Alaskans for Educational Choice. I have read the proposed amendments and wholeheartedly urge you to do anything and everything you can to convince your fellow legislators that these amendments are urgently needed to strengthen and improve the work that many people have already done to bring choice, competition and overall improvement to our public schools. Again, thanks for your efforts to date.

Rep Vezev's Office
ATTN: Ms. Rynniva Moss

Subject: Asst. Attorney General Memo on
Charter School Preferences

Here is the opinion of Asst Attorney General for
your information.

Just received the fax on proposed changes to
the Charter School Law. I would really
appreciate the opportunity to comment and
make a few suggestions based on our
experiences. Thank you for sending the
draft.

Becky Huggins
Coordinator, Midnight Sun Family
Learning Center (Charter School)
P.O. Box 878629
Wasilla, AK 99687
907-373-6419
907-373-6420 (Fax)

FEB-26-97 11 38 FROM: DEPT OF EDUCATION-DIV YLS ID: 8074653396

PAGE 2/4

MEMORANDUM**State of Alaska
Department of Law**TO: Rick Cross, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education

DATE: February 18, 1997

FILE NO.: 663-97-0240

TELEPHONE NO.: 465-3600

FROM: *J. L. Levy*
Janice Gregg Levy
Assistant Attorney General
Human Services Section - JuneauSUBJECT: Charter schools
preferences

You have asked our office whether a district or the State Board of Education (Board) may approve a charter school application that includes an enrollment plan giving preference to children of the organizers of the charter school. For the reasons set forth below, we believe that a district and the Board may approve such an enrollment plan. Absent a regulation requiring the preference, however, we advise against mandating that districts include the preference in their enrollment plans.

The question was first raised by a charter school organizer from the Anchorage School District (ASD). She enclosed copies of two legal opinions from the ASD's counsel, Jermain Dunnagan & Owens. The first, dated October 9, 1996, stated that an enrollment preference for children of the organizers of a charter school would be in violation of AS 14.03.265. That statute provides that if applications exceed available space, students must be selected by random drawing. The second letter, dated November 13, 1996, opined that the ASD's current enrollment policy could be used as a charter school enrollment policy, even though it permits preferences for siblings and for attendance area children, allowances for gender and racial balance and diversity, and for cases of hardship. The opinion states that "it is possible that the Department of Education could arrive at a different interpretation. It is our opinion, though, that use of the lottery procedures is a defensible position."

When construing a statute, a court attempts to give effect to the intent of the legislature, with due regard for the meaning that the statutory language conveys to others. Rydwall v. Anchorage School Dist., 864 P.2d 526, 528 (Alaska 1993). The construction should be reasonable and practical, in accordance with common sense. O'Callaghan v. State, 826 P.2d 1132, 1136 (Alaska 1992). As generally understood, charter school legislation was enacted to provide an alternative to educational programs offered by a local school district. It comes as no surprise that parents most often provide the impetus for an alternative program.

Development of a charter school application requires considerable time, effort, skill, and emotional contribution. The

Rick Cross, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education
Our file no.: 663-97-0240

February 18, 1997
Page 2

legislation was clearly intended to reward families who made such a contribution with an alternative educational program within our system of public education. It would have a chilling effect on the charter school experiment as a whole if those who labored for an alternative in the district could not be assured that their children could participate in the program. Moreover, the charter school's success or viability might be threatened if those parents who were willing to make the substantial contribution of time and effort did not "win" in a lottery. We do not believe that the legislature intended parents who spent hundreds of hours designing, writing, and lobbying for a charter school to be precluded from enrolling their students in that program. Indeed, the understood purpose of the legislation was to provide those parents with an alternative for their children if they could successfully negotiate the statutory, regulatory, and district-imposed requirements.

The Board has already approved a program that, apparently, permitted the charter school organizers' children to be enrolled.¹ We believe that approval is defensible, and not in conflict with the requirements of AS 14.03.265, requiring a lottery if applications exceed enrollment space. A reasonable reading of the statute, read with the purposes of the charter school legislation in mind, would permit organizers' children to have preference for enrollment at least for a year. Thereafter, enrollment of students previously enrolled might also be a reasonable policy.

We agree with the November 13, 1996 opinion letter from Jermain Dunnagan and Owens that the ASD enrollment plan embodies important goals and policies that the legislature probably did not intend to abrogate in enacting AS 14.03.265.² Apparently, however, it does not grant a preference to charter school organizers' children. In our view, the ASD could add that preference and still be consistent with AS 14.03.265. Thus, we disagree with the conclusion set out in the October 9, 1996 letter from the firm to the ASD.

¹ We base this statement on information provided in Linda Sharp's letter to the Commissioner, and verbally confirmed by department staff.

² We have neither seen nor reviewed the ASD enrollment policy. We base our opinion solely on the description of its terms set out in the letter from Howard Trickey to Carol Comeau, dated November 13, 1996.

FEB-25-97 11:38 FROM:DEPT OF EDUCATION-DIV TLS ID:9074653396

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Ric. Cross, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education
Our file no.: 663-97-0240

February 18, 1997
Page 3

We caution that this opinion should not be misconstrued to support the notion that a small group of parents could design a school that only their children could attend. The enrollment preference should be limited to the children of the few parents who put in the extraordinary efforts required to get the charter school off the ground. After those preferences are filled, many spaces should be available for other district students.

To summarize, if a district approves a charter school application that contains an enrollment policy granting preferences to children of the organizers, we see no legal impediment to the Board approving the application. If the approval is challenged as violating the random drawing requirements of AS 14.03.265, we believe good faith arguments can be made to defend the approval. If the Board desires to make such a preference a requirement, it should do so by adopting a regulation implementing and clarifying AS 14.03.265. In the absence of such a regulation, we do not advise disapproving an application solely because it contains an enrollment policy that uses a pure random drawing for all spaces in the charter school.

JGL:prm

cc: Darby Anderson, Director
Alyeska Central School

April 2, 1997

Al Vezey
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 13
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Al,

Your charter school bill was sent to me yesterday. Many of your revisions are excellent. I especially am in favor of alternative granting boards. I am, however, concerned about the deletion of the funding. The funding issue was the biggest issue during our year of organization and continues to be a major concern. Each year, we have to renegotiate the budget with our local school board. The law is not clear about the distribution of funding and that causes charter schools and the granting agency to be in adversarial positions. It is my position that the funding should be equitable and fair in accordance with the other student funding. I encourage you to directly address the funding issue in this law. Without clear direction from the state legislature, charter schools will not flourish.

Sincerely,

Terri Austin
Chinook Charter School
Fairbanks

HOMER L. BURRELL

P.O. BOX ~~75X~~ 100764
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510
907/~~274-1688~~ or 274-8927

March 27, 1997

Honorable Al Vezey
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol
Jureau, AK 99801-1162

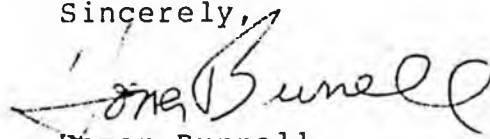
Re: Proposed bill on charter schools

Dear Representative Vezey:

I understand you have been working on a proposed bill which will provide necessary authority to charter schools in Alaska. From what I hear, you are on the right track. From what I've seen and heard, some school districts, perhaps fearful of competition, seek to strictly control charter schools. The very purpose of charter schools is to provide a much-needed alternative, or alternatives, to the "main-line" schools.

I have testified before the Anchorage School District in favor of charter schools, and commend you for your efforts.

Sincerely,



Homer Burrell

Jane Sauer
18011 Golden View Drive
Anchorage, AK 99516

June 28, 1996

To Whom it May Concern:

I am a resident of Anchorage and live in the Bear Valley Elementary School zone. I have three children, the oldest of whom just finished first grade.

In the fall of 1993, two years before my son was to enter kindergarten, I discovered that the Anchorage School District's five-year plan included plans for a Russian or German language immersion program at Bear Valley School. I learned that a group of parents at the school had been working on getting such a program started for the past couple of years. I was extremely excited to know that my neighborhood school might house such a program! Unfortunately, within a matter of weeks (or days) after my discovery, the School Board failed to include funding for the program (\$7,500 for the first year) in its budget.

After several inquiries, I hooked up with a few of the parents who had originally promoted the language immersion program. Since the children of the original group of proponents were by then in first grade, most of those original proponents had moved on to other issues since their children had already missed the opportunity. (A language immersion program is phased in over a period of 6-7 years--beginning with kindergarten or first grade and moving up a grade level each year. So, any child already in school before the initial year of the program would not be able to participate in it.) After many hours of working with school board members and district administration, we were told that if we could get funding for the first two years of the program (i.e., \$15,000) from a business partner (i.e., it wouldn't cost the District any extra money) the administration would recommend to the board that the program be instated.

After more hours of work, we were able to obtain a commitment for funding the program. During the summer of 1994, the Board passed a resolution directing the district to instate the program providing there was adequate support for it among the Bear Valley Community.

Because of the teachers' strike in the fall of 1994, the district did not proceed on evaluating the level of "support" at Bear Valley until early 1995. At that time, the district held two informational meetings about the program at the school. They also created an informational packet and survey to be distributed to present and future parents at Bear Valley. During this period, a very vocal group of opponents to the program emerged. Most of these opponents had no children young enough to be affected by the program one way or the other. Certain individual members of the "executive board" of the PTA distributed a flyer to all school children opposing the program for various reasons. Much of the information contained in that flyer was erroneous and/or untruthful. Despite all the negative outcry against the program by individuals who had an established network and direct access to the staff and principal at the school, the survey results showed a majority of parents favored establishment of the program. For parents of preschoolers

(those whose children would be affected by the program) the approval rate was around 90%. For parents of kindergartners and 1st and 2nd graders (only the children in kindergarten might be affected by the program), the approval rate was around 67%. For parents of 3rd - 6th graders (those whose children would not be effected by the program), the approval rate was greater than 50%.

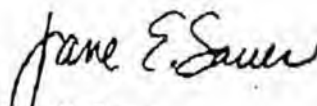
Unfortunately for the majority of parents who wanted to see the program established at Bear Valley, the very well-organized and well counseled opposition was able to scare off the administration and school board members. The administration recommended that the program not be established at Bear Valley but that the Board investigate establishing it in a new school set to open in 1996-97. (No steps have been taken to start the program in that new school.)

The foregoing is a brief synopsis of the series of events leading to...nowhere. Living through this process was one of the most frustrating experiences of my life. We proponents had followed and satisfied every aspect of the district's internally established procedure for establishing an alternative program. We had even obtained funding for the additional cost of the program. In the end, however, because there was opposition to the program, the administration recommended against it, and the board voted so.

I do not have a comprehensive understanding of the charter school law. I do understand that the law directs that only the local school board can prescribe an application process for the establishment of a charter school in that district. I believe this is a fatal flaw in the legislation. I have little faith that an application procedure established by the local school district would encourage the establishment of these charter schools or whether satisfaction of this procedure would be adequate should there be opposition to a given charter school application. I further understand that the local district can approve or deny an application. Based on the past experiences alternative school proponents have had with procedures established by the Anchorage School District, I believe proponents of a charter school should be able to go to a different body than the local--and very political--school board.

I believe that a community (whether neighborhood, city, or State) is only as strong as its public schools. Not all children learn well in the traditional school programs. The establishment of non-traditional programs within a school district strengthens the public school system--and thereby the surrounding community--and encourages parents who might otherwise leave the public school system for private schools to stay within and contribute to public schools. In amending the charter school law, I encourage you to consider the implications of the body selected to establish the application procedure and rule on applications.

Sincerely,


Jane E. Sauer

June 26, 1996

Hello,

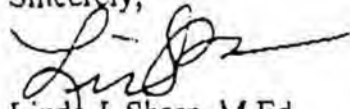
I am a parent who has lived in the Inlet View (downtown) neighborhood for more than seven years. When I realized that our chances of getting into the public alternative school of our choice were hopeless (waitlists are very long, and we were close to the bottom, having waited three years at that point), I asked the Superintendent how we could have an optional program at Inlet View. Mrs. Comeau suggested we ask the principal, Becky Berkshire, to survey parents for their interest. She did, and out of approximately 300 neighborhood students, a short, initial survey showed that 80 students' families would sign up without any more information. Others were interested, but needed more information.

The District admitted in writing that there would be no start up costs, and that the program would cost no more than the existing traditional program to operate. They stated in writing that 111 students who belonged at Inlet View were at other District programs (alternatives). There were more in addition, homeschooling and privately educating children. It is the school in Anchorage known to have the highest percentage of parents choosing something other than their neighborhood, traditional program.

In spite of the interest, long standing back to 20 years of history, Mrs. Comeau held a meeting of all parents and teachers. She said that if anyone opposed this program starting at Inlet View, "we promise we will not shove this down your throat." I have a tape recording of that meeting and her exact words. Teachers and principals worked against the program, telling students their children would not do well in an optional environment, and other subtle threats. Mrs. Berkshire decided to write a letter to families telling them she decided not to have the optional program. That was May, 1994. That fall, Inlet View School had 70 less students in September than it did the previous May.

This is only one of many times District officials have trashed parents' requests for choices over their children's education, that cost nothing and have demonstrated tremendous success. Please amend the charter school law as Dave Titus requests so that we may have more choices in public education.

Sincerely,



Linda J. Sharp, M.Ed.

Box 1900-51

Anchorage, AK 99519 Tel. 279-4693

Jacqueline Bressers

Attorney At Law
310 K Street, Suite 305
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 272-2772

28 JUNE 1996

Dear Legislators:

I am writing to urge you to support a stronger charter school law by revising and amending the current law which effectively precludes parents from being active participants in their children's education. I would like to see local school boards and districts provide administrative support and services while encouraging parents, teachers and interested community members to develop innovative approaches to learning. Unless school boards and districts are forced to realize that parents are legitimately capable of proposing viable choices for learning, they will continue to view education as their exclusive domain, micro-managing every decision within a school and continue to exclude parents from the education of their children. Districts can appropriately provide accounting, purchasing, construction, maintenance, and bussing services while allowing parents and the community the opportunity to offer viable learning experiences.

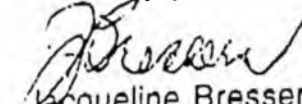
The Anchorage School District and Board have a history of rejecting parent-based and parent-initiated educational proposals since the inception of the Chugach and Stellar Optional Programs. Most recently I was a member of a proposal team that submitted a proposal for a School of the Arts. We spent approximately two years developing the proposal in conjunction with the Anchorage School District administration and school board. Our team not only satisfied but exceeded every requirement made by the administration. We received praise and support for our proposal during its development and numerous presentations to the Board. After we had finally secured a place on the school board's agenda, the administration decided to recommend a study of arts-based schools throughout the country. Thus, our proposal was tabled indefinitely, neither approved nor rejected, while the district engaged in an 18 month study of arts-based education. Although the district's study revealed that arts-based schools around the country are the number one or two schools in their districts, there still has been no decision or action taken by the Anchorage School District or Board on the parent-based proposal for the School of the Arts. (Please see attached memorandum). Unfortunately, this is just one of many examples of how the Anchorage School District and Board undermine parent initiatives.

I strongly urge you to make revision of the charter school law a legislative priority and amend it to reflect its intent to involve parents and the community in

developing effective and viable educational choices for our children. There is no question that public education in our country is in crisis and in need of change. Please support the future of our children by enabling viable educational choices in our public schools.

Thank you for your interest and time.

Sincerely yours,



Jacqueline Bressers
Parent

4716 N.E. 47th Avenue
Vancouver, WA 98661
June 21, 1996

To whom it may concern

I am writing this letter to encourage state and local officials to strengthen the charter school legislation and to provide for direct local funding of charter schools.

When my oldest child neared kindergarten age in Anchorage, I learned about the local education options and found that, although there seemed to be many choices, they were not available to him because of the very limited number of spaces and a lottery system that effectively excluded him from participation. I embarked on a three year effort to expand the number of available spaces in alternative programs and to improve access to those programs. I began the process with high hopes and received apparent encouragement from Anchorage School District administrators. However, as I continued in the process, I found that those administrators were not truly in favor of expanding choice within the district through parent-led efforts. New programs were approved only when the school district "owned" the idea or the program.

I attended countless meetings and hearings where administrators and school board members manipulated the process, encouraged opposition from others, and put up needless obstacles for parent-led groups to hurdle. Although the concept for my group's Southeast Anchorage Optional Elementary Program was quickly approved (primarily due to the large waiting lists and the proven efficacy of the program), final approval and siting of the program were much more difficult. In the end, administrators combined our proposal and a secondary optional program proposal, gave it minimal funding on a bond proposal, selected a substandard site, and then effectively excluded parents from the planning and staffing process. During the same time frame, I witnessed several other individuals and groups being constantly thwarted in their attempts to initiate or expand alternative programs. All of them came to the table with the expectation that the school district would deal with them fairly and objectively, only to be disappointed after great expenses of time and money. School district administrators have a great deal of power and they fight hard to retain that power; they do not want parents or teachers to play a large role in planning or delivering education.

I strongly encourage that charter school proposers be given another avenue for approval of a charter program, such as a separate board. The local school district has shown nothing but active opposition to the charter school principle of parent and/or teacher driven education. Direct funding at the same level as other district students is necessary to assure that charter school programs are not doomed to failure due to inadequate funding. Charter programs also deserve to be housed in school district facilities, just as all other district students. Several new schools have been or are being built, and there is adequate space for the students who are housed today to be given space tomorrow, even if they enroll in a charter program. They do not deserve to be shoved into a church basement or an old storefront merely because they and their parents choose a different style of education within the public system.

One of the reasons I left Anchorage was my frustration with the school district administration and its hostility to alternative programs. I may return in the future, and I hope that the system is more responsive to parents who choose to educate their children through alternative means or methods. Modifying the existing charter school statute and funding mechanisms will make that objective possible.

Sincerely,



Catherine Portlock
(360) 750-9500



ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

326 Fourth St., Suite 404 Juneau, AK 99801-1101 • (907) 586-9702 • (800) 478-9702 • FAX (907) 586-5879
 E-mail: acsa@pdialaska.net • Home Page: <http://puffin.pdialaska.net/~acsa>

POSITION STATEMENT

SB 182 " An Act relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools."

The ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS is opposed to SB 182.

It is our belief that the original charter school initiative was passed with sufficient language to allow a pilot program which was to run for a five year period. During the five year period, documentation of the process of approval of charter schools and the types of charter schools created would be recorded for evaluation of the whole charter school program. It is our belief that after the five year trial period, we will be able to see clearly those things that worked and those that did not. The result could mean changing the current statute.

We have not yet met the number of charter schools allowed for under the current law. Charter schools are still being developed. There has not been one charter school that has completed one full year of operation yet.

At this time we do not need to create a whole new bureaucracy by appointing charter school boards on the local level and a statewide charter school board. Elected local schools boards must have the authority and control over every public school within their boundaries. They must continue to control the financial responsibilities of their local district. If they do not perform to the satisfaction of the community they represent, their evaluation comes from the next election.

Alaska is a small state. Our financial resources are limited. We need to work within the system to improve that which is necessary to change. And, we must celebrate those educational successes that every school district in Alaska has had.

It is more important to us to work on improving the current public education by lowering class sizes in the public school classroom, particularly within the lower grades than creating a whole new bureaucracy. It is more important for us to collectively address the learning of all children.

Stephen McPhetres
 Executive Director

May 8, 1997

Senators Sharp and Pearce
Senate Finance
Capital Building
Juneau, Alaska
sent via fax

Dear Senators Sharp, Pearce and Finance members;

Senate Bill 182, the revamping of the Charter Schools law currently on the books, will empower other parents like myself to make educational choices for their children.. Please consider voting for the changes it presents.

Charter schools are fairly new to Alaska. Outside of Anchorage there are not many choices in educational format. And it is well known that people, children, have a variety of learning styles. Please pass SB182 so that parents, teachers, administrators can continue to gather information and make an informed decision on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of charter schools in the future.

Thank you for considering this message.

Sincerely,

Odin Brudie, Parent
Juneau Community Charter School

Senators Sharp and Pearce

May 8, 1997

TO: Senators Pearce and Sharp

From: Nancy S. Schierhorn
11935 Kristie Circle
Anchorage, Alaska 99516
345-5567

Re: SB 182 - Charter School Bill

I support SB 182 and urge you to do everything you can to move this bill along immediately. Children are already benefiting from increased school choice, and this bill will be a big step towards increasing those benefits at a very minimal cost. There is nothing to lose!!! Thank you.

May 8, 1997

Senators Sharp and Pearce
Senate Finance
Capital Building
Juneau, Alaska
sent via fax


Dear Senators Sharp, Pearce and Finance members;

Today you will hear SB182-the revamping of the Charter Schools law currently on the books. Please consider voting for the changes it presents. These changes will help other parents like myself to feel empowered in educational choices for their children.

Charter schools are new to Alaska. They have been working in the lower 48 for a number of years now but there is not much information that tells us how they will or are working for our children in Alaska. Outside of Anchorage there are not many choices in educational format. And it is well known that people, children, have a variety of learning styles. Please pass SB182 so that we can continue to charter schools, gather information and make an informed decision on their effectiveness or ineffectiveness in the future.

I am sorry not to be there in person to deliver this message but I thank you for considering it anyway.

Sincerely,



Frankie Pillifant, Parent
Juneau Community Charter School

Public Opinion Message

Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO)
 • 718 W 4th Avenue, Suite 200, Anchorage, AK 99501 • Phone: 258-8111 Fax 258-1261

This form MUST be completely filled out. You may phone, fax, or deliver your POM to any LIO.

From: Please PRINT the information below.

| | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Mr., Mr., Mrs... | First name | M.I. | Last name | Jr., Sr., III... |
| | Doris | | Dallas | |
| Mailing address | | | Zip | |
| 450 Sun Way | | | 99709 | |
| Residence (street) address if different from mailing address | | | Zip code | |
| Fairbanks | | | | |
| Phone (number) | | Group affiliation (if applicable) | | Date |
| 474-3365 | | fax 479-5385 | | Nov 20 1998 Thurs |

To: Put a ✓ in the appropriate box(es).

| Committees | | House members | | Senate members | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| H or S | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Community & Regional Affairs (cra) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Austerman (aus) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Adams (ada) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance (fin) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Barnes (bar) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dorley (don) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Health, Ed., & Social Services (hes) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Berkowitz (ber) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Duncan (dun) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Judiciary (jud) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brica (br) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ellis (el) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Labor & Commerce (l&c) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Burda (bur) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Green (gre) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Resources (res) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cowdery (cow) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hairford (hal) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rules (rts) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Croft (cro) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hoffman (hof) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | State Affairs (sta) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Davies (dav) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Kelly, T. (ke) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation (tra) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Davis (dag) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leman (lem) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dyson (dys) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lincoln (lin) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Elton (elt) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mackie (mak) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Postar (pos) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Miller (mil) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Green (grn) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parnell (par) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grussendorf (grs) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parce (par) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hanley (han) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Phillips, R. (phi) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hodgins (hod) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sharp (sha) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hudson (hud) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Taylor (tay) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ivan (iva) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Torgerson (tor) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | James (jam) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ward (war) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Joule (jou) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wilken (wik) |

Subject: Fill out the boxes below OR enter a Subject.

| | | | | | |
|----------|-------------|----------------|---|----|--|
| HB or SB | Bill number | and check one: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support | OR | enter a general Subject (LIO staff may assist) |
| | 182 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Oppose | | Establish Local Board |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Amend | | |

Message: Your PRINTED message cannot exceed 50 words or contain any vulgar language.

| | | | | |
|---------|-----------|-------------|--------------|----|
| As | a | grandfather | of | 6 |
| I | encourage | you | to | 10 |
| track | this | bill. | Please | 15 |
| it | in | Finance | Friday. | 20 |
| | | | | 25 |
| It's | a | small | step | 30 |
| the | right | direction | in | 35 |
| charter | school | law. | And | 40 |
| Senator | Sharp | for | helping | 45 |
| with | this | improved | legislation. | 50 |

Public Opinion Message

Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO)
• 716 W 4th Avenue, Suite 200, Anchorage, AK 99501 • Phone: 258-8111 Fax: 258-1261

This form MUST be completely filled out. You may phone, fax, or deliver your POM to any LIO.

From: Please PRINT the information below.

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|------------------|
| Mr., Mr., Mrs... | First name | MI | Last name | Jr., Sr., III... |
| | Carrie | | Merrill | |
| Mailing address | | | | Zip code |
| 5346 Lake Park Cir | | | | 99517 |
| Residence (street) address if different from mailing address | | | | Zip code |
| Anchorage | | | | 99517 |
| Daytime telephone number | Group affiliation (if applicable) | | | Date |
| 245 5501 | Public School Teacher | | | Carrie Merrill |

To: Put a ✓ in the appropriate box(es).

| Committees | | House members | | Senate members | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> H or S | Community & Regional Affairs (cra) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Austerman (aus) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Adams (ada) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance (fin) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Barnes (bar) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Donlay (don) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Health, Ed., & Social Services (hes) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Berkowitz (ber) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Duncan (dun) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Judiciary (jud) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brice (brf) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Elli (eli) |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | State Affairs (sta) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Davies (dav) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Kelly, T. (kai) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation (tra) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Davis (dai) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Loman (lom) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dyson (dys) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lincoln (lin) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> | Elton (elt) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mackie (mak) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Foster (foe) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Miller (mil) |
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| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hudson (hud) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Taylor (tay) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ivan (iva) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Torgerson (tor) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | James (jam) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ward (war) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Joule (joi) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wilken (wik) |

Subject: Fill out the boxes below OR enter a Subject.

| | | | | | |
|----------|-------------|----------------|---|----|---|
| HB or SB | Bill number | and check one: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support | OR | enter a general Subject (LIO staff may modify): |
| SB | 180 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Oppose | | Charley Schools |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Amend | | |

Message: Your PRINTED message cannot exceed 50 words or contain any vulgar language.

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Please | fast | track | and | remove |
| tomorrow | ASD | is | very | political |
| and | Biased. | | | |
| | We | need | a | choice |
| | where | to | submit | our |
| indications | | | we | are |
| above: | to | realize | any | results |
| the | school | is | track | in |
| w/B | closed | if | it | were |
| a | Charter | - for | failure | to educate! |

SENATE FINANCE CO-CHAIRMEN
TO : SENATOR BERT SHARP
SENATOR DRUE PEARCE
465-2070

FROM : SARAH SCHIERHORN
279-5305

URGE YOU TO SCHEDULE
SB 182 ON SENATE FINANCE
AGENDA FOR FRIDAY 5/9/97.

AS AN ORIGINATOR FOR IDEAS
IN THIS AMENDMENT I KNOW
THAT THE CONCEPTS ARE
NECESSARY TO FACILITATE
CHARTER SCHOOL START-UPS
THANKS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

Michael C. Boots, CPA
P.O. Box 92021 Anchorage, AK 99509

e-mail: adent@alaska.net
Tel: (907) 276-1558 • Fax: (907) 276-6375

May 8, 1997

Senator Bert Sharp
Senator Drue Pearce
State Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senators Sharp and Pearce:

I am writing to urge you to pass Senate Bill 182 out of the Finance Committee as soon as possible. This bill amends the Charter School Law passed in 1995. The central points of the amendment are to remove the limit on the number of charter schools in the State and to provide for an alternative to School Districts for approval of charter schools while still maintaining local control. These changes are vital if we are to realize the benefits of the charter concept through introduction of competitive forces to the current monopoly in public education.

The amendment also includes some much needed guidance to agencies tasked with charter school approval by requiring that charter schools have specific grade level goals for student performance as well as specific means of assessment of that performance. If we are going to have charter schools, we need to do everything we can to define the parameters of accountability for them.

Finally, I would suggest that the fiscal note attached to this bill has been inflated by the Department of Education. They have admitted that they included the cost of an additional employee to perform tasks already being performed by the Department related to the original Charter School Law. In other words, SB182 is being burdened with costs which exist whether it is passed or not. I hope you will take this into consideration. Thank you.

Very truly yours,



Mike Boots, President
Alaskans for Educational Choice

Charlize Higgins
Dallas, TX

Myr SB 182

and Anchorage; it is
nearly apparent that
you do not understand it

Charlie Brown in West-Su

After having observed
needs to move forward,

Give our Alaska Charle
School has ... SB182

It is my intention to

After Senator Penn
Senator Shaper

To Co-Chair Senate Finance

May 8

TO: Senators Sharp and Pearce fax 465-2070

FROM: Leo Albert, Ed.D. 3624 Carlton Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99517 243-0809

Twice this week I went to LIO to speak via teleconference in favor of SB-182.

Senator Wilken does not want the bill to pass, and attempted to prevent voting and all testimony. I never did get a chance to speak.

PLEASE SCHEDULE AND PASS THIS BILL NOW.

As an Adjunct Professor at APU I teach math, but end up tutoring many students in basic math they should have learned in GRADE SCHOOL. The present school district operation has had its chance and failed to educate children even in the basics. It's time to put every school on a yearly contract, or charter, and cancel it if they fail to educate their students.

Thank you.

Senators Sharp - Pearce

Please schedule SB #152
immediately - pass it.

Pat

See attached

May 6, 1997

Memorandum to: Senator Bert Sharp FAX 465-2070

From: Linda Sharp Tel. 245-5501 FAX 245-5502
 RE: SB-182 LOCAL Board for Charter Schools



I am happy to know of your support to improve SB-88, the charter school law which you introduced two years ago. You may have heard from folks in Fairbanks who have attempted to work with the existing system, that this small improvement in charter school law is headed in the right direction. It seems that with the unions and the superintendents, we must take baby steps or we won't be able to move at all.

SB-182 is scheduled for a Senate HESS meeting Wednesday at 9:00. If Senator Wilken allows it to be voted upon (we have been told he is married to President of the Fbx. School Board, and they are on the side with the superintendents and unions), the bill should pass HESS, as Senators Ward, Leman and Green have all indicated support (there are five on that committee.)

Questions I have include:

1. How can we get the bill quickly walked over to you in Finance? Is that up to Senator Wilken? Who decides when the bill gets delivered to you for scheduling? Can someone from your Finance Committee walk over and pick it up once voted upon?
2. If it does get to you, having passed HESS in the morning, how soon could it be heard?
3. I believe the DOE's estimate of cost, at \$84,500, is grossly exaggerated. They indicate \$71.6 for personal services, and I have requested information on where this amount comes from and what it constitutes. I believe the cost is much smaller. Does Finance review the integrity of these estimates? Is this amount going to be a barrier to passing the bill?
4. Once heard in Finance, how soon will it be delivered to Rules?

Thank you again for your support for improving this legislation.



FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

520 Fifth Avenue

Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-4758

(907) 452-2000

Board of Education

May 8, 1997

Cynthia Henry
President
Seat B
474-0034

Bill Burrows
Vice President
Seat B
451-0905

Jane Haigh
Treasurer
Seat D
457-7834

Jennifer Schmidt
Clerk
Seat G
457-2312

Sam William
Member
Seat A
474-0341

Bob Coughlin
Member
Seat C
457-2677

Jane Parrish
Member
Seat F
456-1195

Ger Graham, Col.
Eielson Air Force Base
Representative
372-2434

Rich Carlson, Major
Fort Wainwright Army Post
Representative
356-7840

Zarin Golligly
Student Representative
478-2051

The Honorable Bert Sharp
Alaska Senate
State Capitol, MS 3100
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Sharp:

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board has some serious concerns about SB 182 relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools. We feel that our current state statute regarding charter schools is working well and is too new to revise at this time.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board supports charter schools in theory and in practice. As you know, ours was the first urban district to have a charter school. Chinook Charter School opened in the fall of 1996; all indications are that it has had a very successful first year of operation. New Beginnings Charter School has been approved by the local and state school boards, and will begin operating in the 1997-98 school year.

Operation of a charter school is a major effort on the part of the school district and the proposers of the charter school. From my front row seat in this process since its inception, I have observed that cooperation with the local school board is essential in order to precipitate a charter school. Local school boards are in the best position to assist a charter school with some of the challenges inherent in the process. Although funding for the students follows them to the charter school, charter schools struggle with funding their needs because of the high cost of personnel and the higher overhead of a small school. Our district has solved some of these funding problems for our charter school and subsidized its operation with our district budget.

Please allow our school board members an opportunity to testify before acting on new legislation for establishing and operating charter schools. We could accomplish this via teleconference.

Thank you for your consideration of our opinions on this important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Cynthia Henry, President
Board of Education
CH/plh

cc: Board of Education



Denali Borough School District

P. O. Box 280 • Healy, Alaska 99743 • (907) 683-2218 • FAX (907) 683-2514
John Novak, Superintendent

May 8, 1997

Senator Bert Sharp
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska 99801
FAX 907-465-2070

Dear Senator Sharp:

We believe that the Charter Schools initiatives up to this point are working for the children and parents of Alaska. We do not believe that it is appropriate to fiddle with the process before the existing regulations have had a chance to prove themselves. Expansion of charter schools may or may not be appropriate. We would hope a careful, reasoned approach will prevail in discussion of this important issue.

We would appreciate your efforts to hold SB 182 in the Senate Finance Committee and demand broad public discussion before moving forward with this legislation. The end of session rush is not an appropriate time to consider this type of legislation.

Sincerely yours,

John Novak, Superintendent



To: Bert Sharp **Fax:** 465-2070 **Phone:**
From: Karin Have **Fax:** (907) 276-4763 **Phone:** 276-7933/ 345-6053
Re: SB 182
Date: 5/7/97

Comments: Dear Senator Sharp;

Please rush the charter school bill through your committee. I am a single mom of an autistic teenager and I want this bill to pass ASAP. I would like to see reform in public education before my son graduates from high school. He needs a very small class within a small school that is highly structured. I believe charter schools are the answer.

V:



Anchorage School District

4607 W. Barr Road
P. O. Box 155614
Anchorage, Alaska 99518-6614
(907) 333-9561

SCHOOL BOARD

Debbie Ostlander
President

Kathi Gillespie
Vice President

Lorraine M. Ferris
Clerk

Kally Hanay
Treasurer

Harriet A. Drummond

Peggy Robinson-Yanson
Past President

Dave Weidal

SUPERINTENDENT

Bob Christal

May 8, 1997

Dear Senator Sharp:

I have been advised that you are under heavy pressure to move a Charter School bill, S.B. 182, that bypasses the local school board for approval of charter schools. In Anchorage, we have undertaken the responsibility to maintain a high level of accountability by holding all of our programs, including charter schools, to high standards. In an age when the Department of Education, the Governor and State legislators all are calling for high standards and close scrutiny and accountability for public schools, I find it ironic that individuals would look to design ways to provide for the means to avoid the most accountable elected officials--the local School Board--to provide oversight and accountability for new schools such as charter schools.

In Anchorage, we have a long standing process to insure program quality and accountability when new programs are requested to be established. We have endeavored to follow that model in our locally approved charter schools. Three of the four applications for Anchorage charter schools were approved administratively, by the Anchorage School Board, and by the Alaska Department of Education. In fact, the Department of Education was very complimentary of the work of our District to insure quality in the charter school applicants.

I would encourage you and other legislative leaders to allow the law and the system you designed a year ago to be in place and operating before you modify the law. Because one or two applicants are not successful is no reason to take local control away from a group of elected officials. People who cannot pass the muster or meet criteria for building homes or opening new businesses are not able to go to some other governing body for approval when they fail to meet fair and reasonable criteria. Our children deserve no less when developing accountability measures for new schools. Thank you and I hope you do consider our position on this issue.

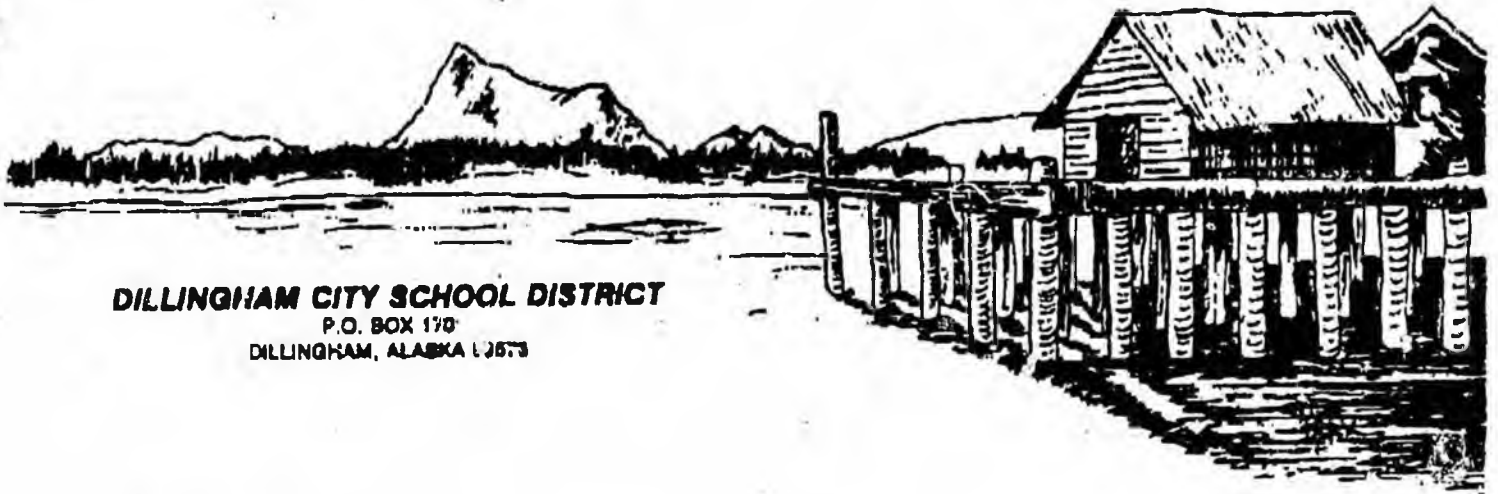
Sincerely,

Bob Christal
Superintendent

gl
cc:

Senate Finance Committee

Anchorage Frontier Schoolhouse, built 1915
Anchorage Women's Club



DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
 P.O. BOX 170
 DILLINGHAM, ALASKA 99573

May 8, 1997

Senator Bert Sharp
 Co-Chair of Senate Finance

RE: SB 182 -- "An Act relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools"

Our district strongly objects to SB182. We currently have in place legislation which you sponsored that gives the state a five year period to properly study charter schools.

To establish unlimited numbers of charter schools, establish local charter school boards and a state Board of Charter Schools flies in the face of common sense. Why do we need to duplicate current local boards and the State Board of Education? How do we know charter schools are worth continuing at all?

It should not move out of Senate Finance.

Sincerely,

Keith Evans
 Superintendent

KE:sw

NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Box 169 • Barrow, Alaska 99723 • (907) 852-5311 • FAX (907) 852-5984

Leland L. Dishman, Superintendent

Nunamut Wolves
Nunamut School
P.O. Box 21028
Anaktuvuk Pass,
Alaska 99721
(907) 661-3226
FAX (907) 661-3402

Atkasuk Eagles
Meade River School
Atkasuk, Alaska 99781
(907) 833-8315
FAX (907) 833-6215

Barrow Whalers
Barrow High School
P.O. Box 560
Barrow, Alaska 99723
(907) 852-8950
FAX (907) 852-8989

MMS WOLVES
Ebon Hopson Sr.,
Memorial Middle School
P.O. Box 509
Barrow, Alaska 99723
(907) 852-3890
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Arctic Fox
Fred Ipalook
Elementary School
P.O. Box 460
Barrow, Alaska 99723
(907) 852-4711
FAX (907) 852-4713

Kavoolook Rams
Harold Kavoolook School
P.O. Box 10
Kaktovik, Alaska 99747
(907) 840-8628
FAX (907) 840-6718

Nutqaut Trappers
Trapper School
Nulqsut, Alaska 99769
(907) 480-6712
FAX (907) 480-6621

Tikigaq Harpooners
Tikigaq School
P.O. Box 148
Point Hope, Alaska 99766
(907) 368-2862 or 368-2863
FAX (907) 368-2770

Cully Garrynas
Cully School
Point Lay, Alaska 99759
(907) 833-2311
FAX (907) 833-2316

Ajak Huskies
Ajak School
P.O. Box 10
Wainwright, Alaska 99782
(907) 783-2541
FAX (907) 783-2560



May 8, 1997

Via Fax: 465-2070

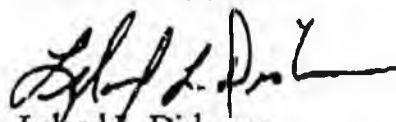
Dear Senator Sharp:

Please consider holding SB 182 in your committee for further review. Perhaps charter schools will prove to be the answer to all of our educational needs in the future; however, I firmly believe that they will deplete the resources available to the public schools of this state while segregating the students of the state into "haves" and "have nots."

Please give the public an opportunity to discuss this topic before releasing it to the floor.

Thank you for your review and consideration.

Professionally yours,


Leland L. Dishman
Superintendent

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Kodiak Island Borough School District
722 Mill Bay Road Kodiak, Alaska 99615
Office of the Superintendent
(907) 486-9210

May 8, 1997

The Honorable Bert Sharp
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Sent via fax: 465-2070

Re: SB 182 *An Act relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools*

Dear Senator Sharp:

On behalf of the Kodiak Island Borough School District, I am requesting that you hold SB 182 *An Act relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools*.

SB 182 opens the door to unlimited charter schools and establishes a local charter school board authorized by municipal ordinance. It also establishes a state Board of Charter Schools which will have final say as to the approval of charter school applications. We do not need to duplicate bureaucracies! We believe that the five year trial period must be allowed to go by before any changes are made to the current law establishing charter schools in Alaska.

I am always available to answer any questions you may have regarding educational issues, and specifically, the Kodiak Island Borough School District.

Sincerely,

Betty Walters
Superintendent of Schools

BW:nbs

cc: Board of Education

FACSIMILE COVER PAGE

To : Senator Sharp

From : Terry McDermott

Sent : 5/8/97 at 2:45:12 PM

Pages : 4 (including Cover)

Subject :

To: All Senators

From: Terry McDermott

I am unable to testify this afternoon on SB 182, but I wanted to share our concerns with you. All public schools must remain accountable and answerable to the local school boards and local communities. Charter Schools are public schools not private. As such they should remain a part of the public school system. It will be disasterous to set up alternative public school systems within cities and communities. Charter schools are new to our state. Please let us take time to be sure they are implemented correctly. There is no hurry to change the current law. Please, wait until we have more information before making changes to the current law. Thank you.



PO Box 201496
Anchorage, Alaska 99520
279-9345

working with you!

May 8, 1997
To: Members of Alaska PTA
From: Terry McDermott, President

Legislative Alert Legislative Alert Legislative Alert
Immediate Action Required -- Please Contact the Members of the Senate
Finance Committee -- along with all other Senators.

Regarding Senate Bill 182 - An Act relating to the establishment and operation of charter schools. by Senator Ward

This act would set up two Charter School Boards to approve and become responsible for charter schools, one at the local level set up by municipal ordinance and a second at the state level.

The members of the state charter school board would be appointed by the governor from a list of persons nominated by chief school administrators of the charter schools.

The local charter school board would be set up by the municipality.

A person interested in starting a charter school would have three options approval by the local school board, the municipal charter school board or the state charter school board before approval by the State Board of Education.

The charter school board would determined the application process.

The charter school would operate under contract with the state charter school board, the municipality or the local school board as appropriate.

PTA's concerns:

1. *Charter schools must be accountable to the local school board in the districts in which they are located.*

School board officials are elected by the public (tax payers) to set policy and govern the school district. Tax payers must have control over how their funds are spent. Local school boards are set up to represent the wishes of the community. One role of the school board is to assure equity across schools within the district. All public schools within the district must be under the supervision of the same body. If this is not done we are, in effect, creating two separate public school districts within the same city. Questions that should be asked, Who is going to be accountable to the tax payers, and communities? How are they going to be held accountable? How will facilities, transportation, textbooks and supplies be purchased or allocated? Will the state send their portion of the funds directly to the charter schools? How will local funds be allocated? Who will determine the amount each school should receive for students? Will the

local school district still be required to support the charter school despite having no oversight of the happenings in the school?

The major point of this bill is to create a separate governing body different than the local school board to oversee charter schools. **Why is this necessary?** Local school boards are set up to protect the education of all children. **If a charter school application is turned down by a school board this must be because the applicant did not meet the standards of a quality educational program.** The school districts within the state have been working with charter school applicants to help them meet these standards. When a program does not, who should be questioned the school board or the applicant?

2. Charter schools must be open to all students. Everyone must have equal opportunity to attend.

3. Charter schools must be supported by specifically allocated public funds in amounts that do not exceed and do not divert moneys from public schools. This new plan could divert funds from other children in the school district.

3. Charter schools must not be operated by for-profit organizations nor be affiliated with a non-public sectarian or religious school. Who will insure that this does not happen? People not directly accountable to the tax payers and voters?

4. Charter schools must not charge tuition or fees not charged by public schools. Who will guarantee that this will not happen?

5. Charter schools must not have a negative impact on public schools. It would seem that setting up two or more separate school systems within a city would definitely have an impact on our public school system. This bill would set the contract for a charter school between the charter school and the city council.

6. Charter schools must have a mechanism for independent evaluation to determine if they are providing students with an education at least comparable to other public schools and fulfilling their missions. Who will guarantee us that this occurs?

7. Charter schools must comply with federal and state laws governing public schools which require fiscal responsibility and accountability. Who will assure us that this is happening?

8. Charter schools must adhere to all federal and state laws which protect the health and safety of children, prohibit discrimination and insure access for all children, and comply with the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Acts. How will we hold a separate oversight board accountable?

The major question: We currently have fifteen charter schools within our state within the past two years, charter schools which have all met the criteria established at the local school district level. **Why is it necessary to change the current law when it is working?**

Bob Cozhill -

SB 182 → 499-3909

< ^{on} School Board >

* taking ^{opposes} away control &
leaving them w/ costs

