



# PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION of TEACHERS

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE SENATE

FROM: JERRY T. JORDAN, PRESIDENT, PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

RE: OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 97

JUNE 28, 2017

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***The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers is OPPOSED to House Bill 97 for three main reasons:***

**House Bill 97 fails to address critical funding problems with the current law.** Instead, it establishes a new funding advisory commission that in effect ignores that very significant funding discrepancies and inequities that exist between charter and traditional public schools. The advisory board is tasked with potentially creating a state-wide charter authorization board—another way of circumventing local control and enabling charter companies to expand their reach.

**House Bill 97 does not address issues of education quality in charter schools,** or allow school districts to hold charters accountable if they fail to provide students with a quality education. The bill does not address cyber charter school quality; and it incorporates separate standards that will allow charter schools to play by different rules than district schools.

**House Bill 97 does nothing to ensure that charters will equitably serve all students and does not address student “push out” in charters.** It fails to ensure charters will equitably serve the most vulnerable students in their communities, including those who are experiencing homelessness, living in foster care, and returning from juvenile justice placement.

**Further, House Bill 97:**

- Increases likelihood that charters could receive 10 year renewals (p.31 for brick and mortar; p.73 for cyber)
- Further stacks the deck in favor of charter schools by adding additional charter representatives to the charter appeal board (p.33)

- Enables back door charter expansion by allowing schools can expand to more than one location. (p.35)
- Allows charters to accept applications electronically or via paper. That does not say that they to accept both. If they require one or the other that may limit families. (p.38)
- Places burden on school district when addressing funding discrepancy questions; and requires that they foot the bill until the issue is resolved. (p.45)
- Allows the yearly charter school audit to be conducted by auditors appointed by the board of that charter, clearly setting it up for a favorable analysis (p.49)
- Fails to require parents of actively registered to be the majority or even mandatory members of the charter board, selected by the democratic election of the parents of active students in the school
- Fails to require that the charter, using public funds, publish their annual budgets on the same schedule and with the same safeguards as public school districts
- Fails to provide a financing mechanism for the unfunded mandate imposed upon a local public school districts when the state board imposes a new or expanded charter on them and strands costs on the public school board in the process
- Fails to address the ownership of real estate that is actually financed by the public school district tax revenues through rental payments to wholly controlled charter subsidiaries.
- Fails to assure transparency in procurement of goods and services by charters and the avoidance of ethical and actual conflicts of interest among charter operators and among the families of charter operators, executive staff and board members despite being funded with taxpayer dollars
- Fails to set equal standards for professional educator evaluation in comparison to public school district employed professional educators and fails to require the evaluation of charter schools on a similar level playing field
- Fails to impose meaningful penalties on charter operators and key staff for misappropriating or illegally using public funds that come into a charter's use or control

**For these reasons, and many more, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers is OPPOSED to House Bill 97 and urges Senators to vote NO.**

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