

MEMORANDUM

TO: Paul Sagan, Chairman of the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education
FROM: Janine Matho, Chief of Policy & Practice, MCPSA
DATE: July 24, 2015
RE: PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CHARTER SCHOOL REGULATIONS 603 CMR 1.04(9)

On behalf of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, I write to convey our support for the proposed amendment to the Charter School Regulations 603 CMR 1.04(9). This key revision to the wording of the regulations has profound, positive implications for new charter applicant groups and for school districts in which charters may be proposed. Specifically, the revised wording allows the state to provide reliable, timely information to new applicant groups *and* districts about which districts are performing in the lowest 10% in a given application year, a crucial piece of information tied to charter authorization.

Access to timely, reliable information about where a new applicant group might plan a new charter school is a fundamental requirement for a successful charter application. Applicant groups invest upwards of eighteen months in a new school proposal, and their application is judged, in part, by numerous criteria directly linked to the community they plan to serve. For example, new applicant groups must demonstrate enrollment demand; positive community relationships and partnerships that will support their school model; the recruitment of a board that reflects the community they plan to serve; and plans for how they will transition new students to the charter school, with an emphasis on how they will serve high need populations that are typical of their sending district. Having accurate, timely knowledge in hand about which communities are available for charter expansion under the lowest 10% is, therefore, essential to the preparation of a high quality charter application and, by extension, the launch of a new charter school.

Districts, likewise, need advance information about their performance and position relative to the lowest 10% performing districts so that they have timely knowledge of whether it may be considered for charter expansion. Furthermore, there is a trend in the field, which is supported by DESE, which encourages new charter applicants to notify, communicate and, where possible, develop a relationship with the superintendent of the district in which the new charter is proposed. The clarification about the status of the district is clearly important to the development of any such relationship.

Should the proposed amendment to the charter regulations fail to pass, new charter applicant groups and districts will suffer. Charter applicant groups may spend time developing proposals, identifying board members, and building relationships with families and other key community stakeholders only to learn – *after* their prospectus has been submitted – that the district(s) where they hoped to start a school is no longer ripe for expansion. This is devastating to a prospective founding group and to prospective families, and also serves as a deterrent to future charter founding groups. Districts will also continue to be subject to the volatility of the current regulations, which gives little notice to districts of determination of their status (in the lowest 10%).

MCPSA requests that the BESE vote in the affirmative to adopt the proposed amendment to the Charter School Regulations 603 CMR 1.04(9) as posted on the DESE website.¹

¹ July 24, 2015: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/proposed/p603cmr1---changes.pdf>