

Pedro A. Rivera
Secretary of Education
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

August 21, 2019

Dear Secretary Rivera,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools (PCPCS) to bring to your attention our disappointment with Governor Wolf's announcement last week regarding the administration's charter school reform package. Our organization and members were so encouraged to hear you speak about collaboration at our annual conference last Fall only to be blind-sided by a proposal that did not involve any collaboration with the charter school sector.

Given the crucial role that charter schools play in the educational sphere in Pennsylvania and given the number of students they currently serve, it is extremely important to ensure that all charter schools are being held to the highest standards. With that in mind, we are flattered that Governor Wolf seems to support part of the proposal that has been looked at by the General Assembly several times, which includes more accountability to charter schools. HB 355, sponsored by Representative Reese, which was voted on by the House of Representatives this past Spring, will codify ethics and transparency requirements for charter schools, their administrators and board of trustees making them subject to the Ethics Act. We hope you would engage with us to help this package of bills become law.

We would like to discuss with you PDE's timeline for developing the regulations discussed in the Governor's press events last week, as well as the process for stakeholder feedback. Two parts of those regulations give us great concern – caps on charter schools and the "fee-for-service" proposal.

As you know, the charter school law is clear that enrollment caps in the Commonwealth are illegal unless they are voluntarily agreed to by the charter school. The anticipated regulation described in the Governor's press release certainly looks like it would run afoul of the law. The charter school community would like more information on how any regulation which proposes to involuntarily cap charter schools passes the legal test.

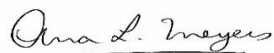
In addition, we are extremely concerned with the fee-for-service model that the Governor is proposing that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) develop only for charter schools. PDE is a state government agency which provides services to public and non-public schools alike. Targeting only charter schools, and no other sector, including the much larger 500 school districts, to pay for their regulations/services seems completely out of line. We would appreciate if you could expound on the logic of the fee-for-service proposal, especially in a

situation when a school district refuses to pay a charter school and the charter school goes to PDE for redirection. Is the intent of the proposal to then charge the charter school to get the money it was rightfully owed?

Costs associated with these burdens should not be placed on the charter schools or PDE, they should be placed on non-compliant school districts. Complaining that charter schools provide an administrative burden, when to the best of our knowledge Governor Wolf has not requested a line item in five budgets for charter school support, seems odd. As you know, charter schools already receive less money to educate a child. Rather than take more money out of the classroom to pay staff salaries at PDE, we urge you to rethink this proposal.

I welcome the opportunity to further discuss this with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Ana Meyers
Executive Director

- cc. The Honorable Pedro Rivera, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
- The Honorable Joseph Scarnati, Senate President Pro Tempore
- The Honorable Jake Corman, Senate Majority Leader
- The Honorable Jay Costa, Senate Minority Leader
- The Honorable Patrick Browne, Majority Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Vincent Hughes, Minority Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Majority Chairman, Senate Education Committee
- The Honorable Andrew Dinniman, Minority Chairman, Senate Education Committee
- The Honorable Mike Turzai, Speaker of the House
- The Honorable Bryan Cutler, House Majority Leader
- The Honorable Frank Dermody, House Minority Leader
- The Honorable Stan Saylor, Majority Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Matthew Bradford, Minority Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Curt Sonney, Majority Chairman, House Education Committee
- The Honorable James Roebuck, Minority Chairman, House Education Committee