

February 24, 2020

Ms. Sylvia Wilson  
President  
Pittsburgh Board of Public Education  
341 S. Bellefield Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear President Wilson and Members of the Board:

I am writing to ask you to support the thousands of children in Pittsburgh who attend public charter schools and **NOT endorse the devastating proposals contained in House Bill 2261 and Senate Bill 1024.**

These bills would rob hundreds of millions of dollars from charter school students, 4,231 of whom are Pittsburgh children. Charter school students and their families are not second-class citizens and they deserve the same financial support as their peers in district schools. Their families pay taxes just like their neighbors. Regardless of what public school a child attends – school district, brick-and-mortar charter or cyber charter – they are ALL public school children and they deserve the same financial support.

Unfortunately, our current charter school laws already permit charter school students to be shortchanged by allowing school districts to keep approximately 25 percent of their funding allocation and for some districts, like Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), that percentage is much higher.

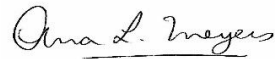
While you and your fellow board members claim that charter school students are a drain on your district's finances, the truth is quite the opposite. In the 2017-2018 school year, PPS spent \$26,428 per non-special education student in the district school after removing charter school students and tuitions payments. It is one of the highest spending rates in the Commonwealth. That same year, Pittsburgh students attending a charter school only received \$14,325, which means **PPS pocketed more than \$12,000 for each of the 4,231 students who chose a charter school.** So, what did the Board and PPS administrators do with the \$51.2 million you withheld from those students? The taxpayers you were elected to serve deserve to know the truth.

Now, on top of what PPS already pilfers from their students who attend a charter school, your Board is considering supporting legislation that would slash another \$280 million from these same students. But the worst part is that **the children most affected by these devastating bills will be charter school students who require special education services.** To cut funding for special education students just because they attend a public charter school is not only discriminatory but heartless. These are the children who need our support the most. Slashing the funds for special education students would make it difficult for charter schools to provide the educational, emotional and physical services these children need. Their families chose a charter school because they felt it was the best educational opportunity for their children, and they should not be punished for this choice.

Our families support charter school reforms that are fair, not arbitrary spending cuts designed to reinstate school districts' monopoly on public education. It is clear that the intention of these lawmakers is not to enact legislation that is fair and beneficial for ALL public school students. If that was their goal, they

would be collaborating with the charter school community to pass meaningful charter reform that strengthens accountability for charter schools and addresses the funding concerns of school districts, all while preserving charter schools for the 143,000+ students who rely on these schools. **Please do not vote to endorse these bills, which have the potential to take away the right of families to choose the best educational environment for their child.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ana L. Meyers". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Ana Meyers  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools