



COMMUNITY-LED SCHOOLS FOR A STRONGER FUTURE

Senate Bill 1621

Let's create avenues for communities to start public charter schools that will meet their kids' needs.

Summary

This bill would add an additional high-quality option for authorizing charter schools and convert the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board into a single, central authorizing entity called the Statewide Charter School Board.

Why We Need It

To create a new public charter school in a community, parents and community members must seek a sponsor to authorize the school's creation. Currently, most public charter schools are sponsored by a local college or university, tribe or local school district. This process for authorizing charter schools in Oklahoma is convoluted and scattered. There are 12 separate authorizers/sponsors — a lot for a state with just 33 authorized charter schools.

The process for authorization is not consistent across all these sponsors, and the structure makes it difficult for quality charter schools to receive authorization, meaning Oklahoma students have limited access to high quality public charter schools.

Charter schools are held to a higher accountability standard than traditional public schools. In cases where a charter school is not serving its students well, we need high quality sponsors who can work with the school to improve or close the school if it is underperforming. High quality charter schools are best done when paired with an expert sponsor who can help ensure students are best served.

The Solution

By creating a statewide authorizer, we can ensure consistency, transparency and efficiency in creating and maintaining high quality public charter schools.

Creating a statewide authorizer will also help focus state resources and can help build a center of excellence for charter authorization, ensuring that authorized charter schools are of the highest caliber. By reconstituting the duties of the existing Statewide Virtual Charter School Board, the state of Oklahoma is being efficient with taxpayer dollars and not reinventing the wheel.

Why This Matters

A statewide authorizer will support growth of high quality public charter schools across the state, and create more options for parents/guardians and students to shape their education at a community level. Eliminating red tape and streamlining the charter authorization process is a smarter, more efficient use of taxpayer dollars to ensure top-of-the-line education options that work for all Oklahoma students.

Bill Details

- This bill will establish the Statewide Charter School Board, built on the foundation of the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board and will consist of nine voting members, with five appointed by the Governor and two each appointed by the Senate President Pro Tempore and the Speaker of the House
- The superintendent of public instruction, or a designee, will serve as a non-voting member
- This board will exercise general supervision over the charter schools it sponsors, recommend legislation pertaining to charter schools to the Legislature, adopt rules and policies that the board deems necessary to accomplish the authorization of high-quality charter schools and grant charter status to qualifying applicants
- The board will be required to justify its budget, providing additional transparency and insight into the authorization process
- A revolving fund will be created in the State Treasury for the Statewide Charter School Board, and any funds currently in the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board revolving fund will be transferred to it