



# Senate Bill 516

Creating avenues for communities to establish high-caliber public charter schools so our kids can excel.

## Summary

This bill would convert the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board into a single, central authorizing entity called the Statewide Charter School Board – providing for consistent education expectations and standards for the charter school authorization process. The Board would have sole authority to sponsor statewide virtual charter schools and serve as an additional option for communities to sponsor charter schools.

## Why This Matters for our Children

A statewide authorizer supports growth of high quality public charter schools across the state, and creates 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.

## The Need

Currently, in order to establish a new public charter school in Oklahoma, parents and community members must seek a sponsor to authorize the school's creation. Most public charter schools in the state are sponsored by a local college or university, tribe or local school district. Altogether, there are 12 separate authorizers/sponsors – a lot for a state with just 33 authorized charter schools – making the process for authorizing charter schools in Oklahoma scattered, inconsistent and convoluted.

Across all 12 sponsors, the process and requirements for obtaining authorization differs. The complicated and multi-tiered approval process makes it difficult for quality charter schools to receive authorization, meaning Oklahoma students have limited access to high quality public charter schools.

In cases where a charter school is not serving its students well, we need high quality sponsors to provide proper oversight and work with the school to improve or close it if it's underperforming. High quality charter schools are more achievable when paired with an expert sponsor who can help ensure students are being served.

## The Solution

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

Focusing state resources into a single authorization entity will help create a center of excellence for the charter authorization process, ensuring our 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.

## 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:
  - Three appointed by the Governor
  - Two appointed by the Senate President Pro Tempore
  - Two appointed by the Speaker of the House
  - The Superintendent of Public Instruction (or a designee)
  - The State Auditor and Inspector (or a designee)
- This board will exercise general supervision over the charter schools it sponsors, recommend legislation pertaining to charter schools to the Legislature, ensure compliance with state laws and training requirements for all charter schools, virtual charter schools, and sponsors, and 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.



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