



MEMO IN OPPOSITION

S.7678 A BILL TO RAISE THE CHARTER SCHOOL CAP WITHOUT TAKING ADEQUATE STEPS TO INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

This bill would raise the charter school cap to 460 schools. While AQE is not opposed to raising the charter school cap, we OPPOSE S.7678 for several reasons.

- The bill does not address key issues regarding charter school accountability and transparency. These schools should be subject to a state comptroller audit in the same manner as is required in public school districts. In addition, every charter school should be required to post their charter, by-laws and financial statements online to increase accountability and transparency; and each charter board meeting should be held in the school building.
- It is well documented that charter schools in New York State on average enroll considerably smaller proportions of English language learners and students with disabilities. While the bill requires charter schools to document additional effort at enrolling these students it only requires that over time charters serve 50% to 75% of the proportion of these students served by public schools. These are publicly funded schools and should be held to the same standards as public schools when it comes to students served. There should be no room for "cherry picking" of students.
- For-profit entities should not be allowed to profit from running publicly funded charter schools.
- Individual school districts should not be over-saturated with charter schools as over-saturation diverts large degrees of funding from public schools and is damaging to the public schools; a cap of 5% enrollment in charter schools per school district, or community school district in New York City, should be enacted (in a district that already exceeds this level of saturation the capacity of charter schools should be capped at that level that has already been authorized by the chartering entity). Outside the Big 5 cities, state mandates for increasing charter schools results in higher property taxes without subjecting the associated costs to a public vote; this is particularly true in districts with high-concentrations of these schools.
- Co-location of charter schools in public schools has proven to be a practice that is often divisive within neighborhoods and communities. It should not be undertaken without the input of the local community--previously legislation proposed a vote of the parent body to approve such a co-location. S.7678 fails to address this critical issue.
- Every charter school should be required to have an independent parent association and a school leadership team.