

To: In the Public Interest & the Center for Popular Democracy

From: GBA Strategies

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New York Charter School Reform Poll

Introduction

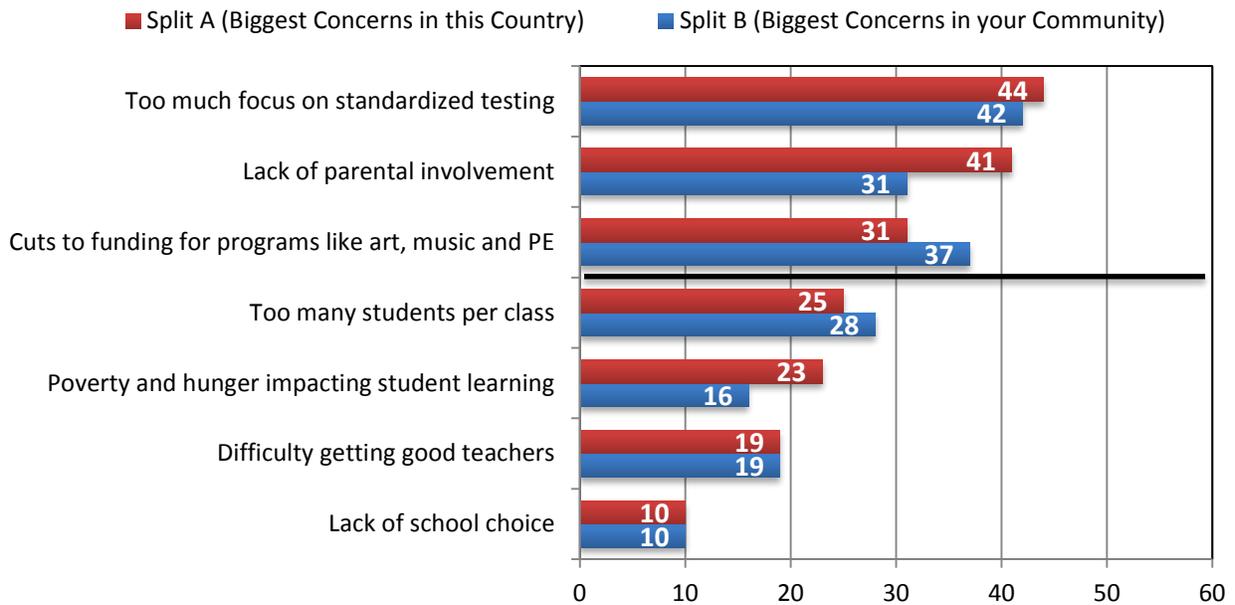
A new survey shows that New Yorkers overwhelmingly favor a series of proposals to reform charter schools. Proposals garnering broad support include initiatives to strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, prevent fraud, serve high-need students, and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

The following are key findings from the New York poll of 700 registered voters, which was conducted March 23rd – 26th, 2015:

Key Findings

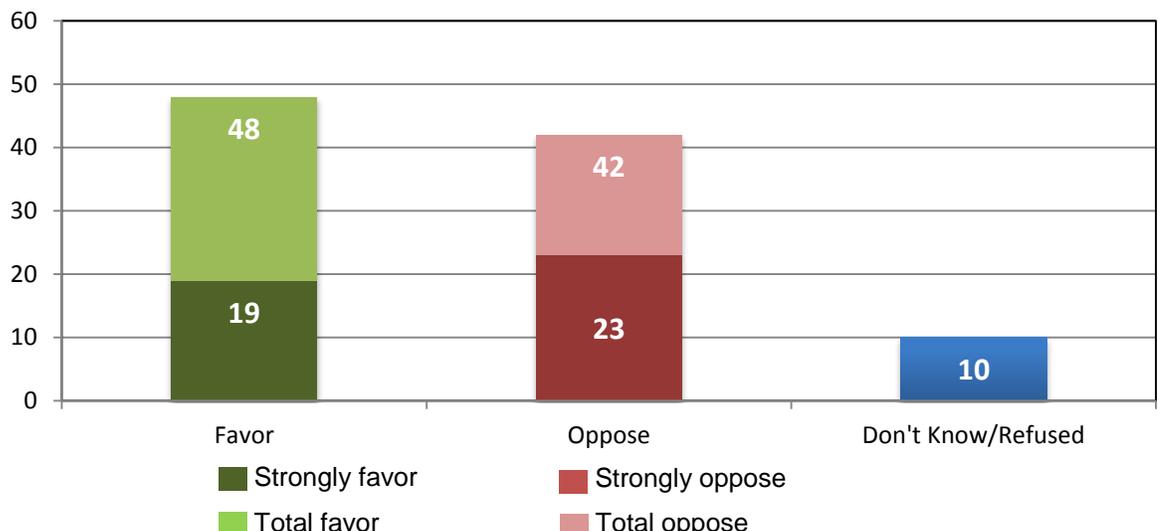
- **Voters have fairly positive views of their public schools and public school teachers.** Sixty-three percent of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood excellent or good, while just 30 percent rate them fair or poor. Voters are more likely to say public schools in their neighborhood are getting better (26 percent) than getting worse (20 percent), while a 41 percent plurality are not seeing much change either way. By nearly 7:1, voters are more likely to have favorable than unfavorable views of public school teachers (71 percent favorable – 14 percent unfavorable).
- **Lack of school choice does not register as a top concern.** Voters focus on lack of parental involvement, too much focusing on standardized testing, and funding cuts as the biggest problems facing K-through-12 education. Lack of school choice ranks dead last on their list of concerns.

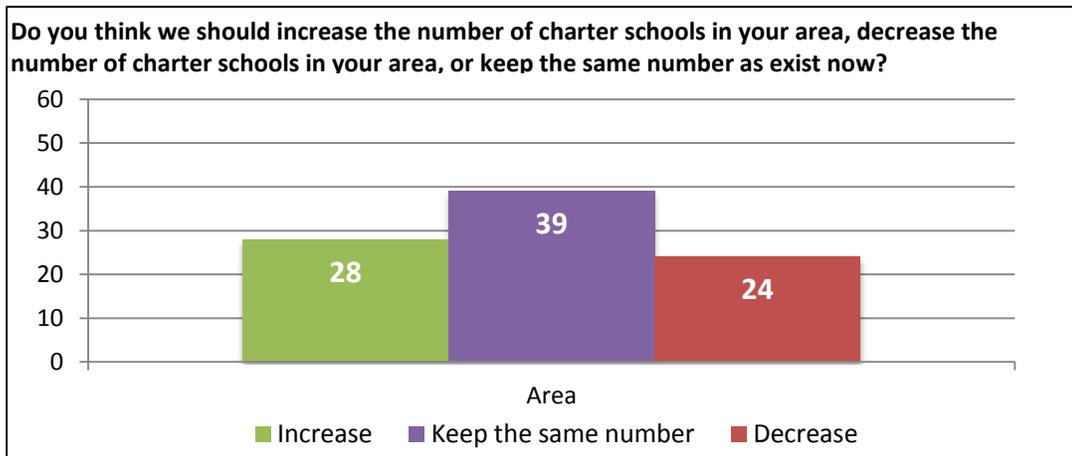
Top Concerns: Standardized Testing, Lack of Parental Involvement, and Funding Cuts



- New York voters have some awareness of charter schools, little clarity on whether they are public and while a plurality supports them overall, they do not want them expanded.** When simply asked their opinion about charter schools, 43 percent favor charter schools, 27 percent oppose them and 31 percent do not have enough information to form an opinion. At the same time, 63 percent want to keep the number of charter schools the same or reduce the number of charter schools in their area, while 28 percent want to increase the number of charter schools in their area. And 56 percent believe charter schools are not public schools, while 35 percent think they are public schools.

As you may know, the vast majority of charter schools are taxpayer-funded schools that are privately managed by organizations outside of the public school system. They operate independently of the public school system and are not required to follow some of the laws and regulations that public schools are required to follow. From what you've heard, do you favor or oppose charter schools?





- Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Huge majorities of voters favor proposals to strengthen transparency and accountability, teacher training and qualifications, anti-fraud measures, ensuring high-need students are served and making sure neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

	Total Support %
Transparency & Accountability	
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to open board meetings to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings	88
Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds	89
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to release to parents and the public how they spend taxpayer money , including their annual budgets and contracts	84
Protect Neighborhood Schools	
Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools	76
Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area	73
Protect Taxpayer Funds	
Require charter schools to return taxpayer money to the school district for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year	77
Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement.	69

Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.	65
Cap the salaries of charter school administrators to no more than double the highest paid public school teacher	62
Serving High Need Students	
Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements	89
Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.	78

Methodology

GBA Strategies conducted a poll in New York of 700 registered voters March 23 – 26, 2015 on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a New York voter file and phone numbers were selected randomly, providing a statistically representative sample. The poll was administered by professional interviewers via telephone with respondents being reached on cell phones and landlines.