

April 3, 2024

Subject: An Important Message from the Board President

To Our Beloved CPS Staff,

Yesterday the House Special Committee on Education Reform voted Senate Bill 727 out of committee. This bill has the potential to change public school as we know it and do great harm to CPS. I am asking for your help in voicing opposition to this bill. Of particular concern is the expansion of charter schools.

SB 727 specifically targets Boone County for charter school expansion that is not authorized by the locally elected board or citizens in our community. Currently, outside of St. Louis and Kansas City, a charter school is only allowed in one of two cases. One, a district is provisionally accredited for 3 years or unaccredited. Two, the local board votes to approve the charter. Neither of these measures would be in place under SB 727.

Why is this a big deal? The answer is funding. Public school funding is based on enrollment, so if a student leaves CPS for a charter school, they take their funding with them. Here's the kicker – they take not only state funding; they also take LOCAL funding. The number of students being educated stays the same, but the money allotted gets split between two parallel systems. CPS will still have the same buildings, fixed costs, and staff (since not all students who leave for a charter school would come from the same grade level or the same building), but we will have less revenue coming in.

Obviously, this is not a sustainable model. Over time the district could have to ask for a tax increase or be forced to reduce services or staff. This is not the future we want for children in our growing, supportive community and it is the kind of decision a board never wants to make.

We oppose the diversion of public money to a duplicate education system that has not proven to produce any better outcomes for students and, in fact, has failed in many cases. We object to the investment in this duplicate system that is not subject to the same assessment or reporting requirements as we are. When charters get to pick and choose which students they take and which rules they follow, to say it is not a level playing field is an understatement.

If you share these concerns, your help is needed to contact legislators TODAY and share your views. In addition to opposing charter expansion, you might point out that many provisions of the bill will require annual budget appropriations that the state will likely not be able to fund. If you are so inclined, email key legislators (see list below) from your personal email account. You may identify yourself as a district employee, but please indicate that you are sharing your personal views and, in accordance with policy GBCB, this should be done on your own time.

The Board of Education believes in the mission of CPS now more than ever and we will continue to advocate for the support our public district deserves. We will fight for our community, our students, and for each of you.

We humbly ask for your help,

Suzette Waters
President, Columbia Board of Education