

AB462 PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Date: April 30, 2019
To: Senate Committee on Education
Re: AB462 Proposed Amendment

The Nevada State Education Association represents teachers and education support professionals across the state. We believe that every Nevada student deserves a high-quality public education.

NSEA supported AB462 as introduced to give Nevada the time and space to implement appropriate controls and accountability of Nevada charter schools. However, this language was replaced by language requiring the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA) to prepare a five-year Growth Management Plan to be submitted to the Legislative Committee on Education.

NSEA now proposes an amendment to AB462 and strongly encourages the Senate Committee on Education to enact stronger controls on charter school expansion.

Charter schools were initially promoted by educators who sought to innovate within the local public school system to better meet the needs of their students. Over the last 22 years, charter schools have grown dramatically to include large numbers of charters that are privately managed, largely unaccountable, and not transparent as to their operations or performance. Many charter schools have devolved far from the original concept as small incubators of education innovation.

The explosive growth of charters has been driven, in part, by deliberate and well-funded efforts to ensure that charters are exempt from the basic safeguards and standards that apply to public schools. This growth has undermined local public schools and communities, without producing any overall increase in student learning and growth. It is important to note, that most recent studies have shown that public schools outperform charter schools when accounting for student demographics, and public schools educate every student, including English learners, students in poverty, and students with individualized education plans. While charters are prohibited from discriminating, they serve far fewer students in poverty, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

While it is good public policy to require the SPCSA to prepare a five-year Growth Management Plan, require charter sponsors to work with school districts to prepare an evaluation of the academic needs of students in the area, and reemphasize the need for site evaluations, it does not go far enough. **NSEA believes that the legislature should assert strong controls of Nevada charter schools, including joining 21 other states in capping charter school expansion.**

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS FROM NSEA:

1. Cap the total number of new charter school applications that may be approved by the State Public School Authority at 10 per year and with no more than 5000 new students per year.
2. Any charter operator of an existing charter school with a 1-star rating shall not be eligible for expansion or to site a new charter school.
3. Prohibit any charter school from increasing enrollment by more than 5% per year.
4. Require that any school district in which a proposed charter school will be located (whether authorized by the district or the State Public Charter School Authority) to make a finding of whether the proposed model of charter school can be accomplished within the school district structure of public schools and whether the charter school would have any negative financial, academic, or facilities impact on existing public schools or the school district. If the district could operate that proposed model of school or if the proposed charter school would have a negative financial, academic, or facilities impact on existing public schools or the school district, the application for the new charter school shall be denied.
5. Cap the number of allowed online or virtual charter schools at the current number of schools and current student enrollment.