

December 15, 2011

What People are Saying about CCSA's Call for Non-Renewal

Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education

Good charter schools are part of the solution, but bad charter schools are part of the problem. We need courageous leadership from the charter school movement itself to step up and hold their schools accountable. The California Charter Schools Association has been a true leader on this front. This is an important conversation for California to have, and one that we need to have across the country.

Ursula Wright, Interim President and CEO, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the first charter school opening, it is imperative that the public charter school sector not only celebrate its successes but acknowledge its short fallings so that they can be remedied. It is for this reason that I applaud CCSA's new accountability initiative, which includes endorsing closure of persistently underperforming charter schools. While school closures are never comfortable for anyone, it is imperative that we as a movement stay true to the accountability principle that remains a defining component of the charter bargain. I thank CCSA for consistently embracing accountability and rest assured that California's charter school students benefit from its thoughtful efforts.

Greg Richmond, President & CEO, National Association of Charter School Authorizers

The charter school movement was founded on a belief that only good schools should have the privilege of educating children and that failing schools shouldn't go on forever. CCSA is putting that belief into action by calling for the closure of the lowest performing charter schools in California. It's not easy for anyone to call for the closure of any school, much less the charter school association. In doing so, CCSA is showing real courage by saying it cares more about the education of children than about the interests of adults. In California, the school districts and other agencies that oversee charter schools should heed this recommendation. Across the country, public education would be stronger if more adults acted like CCSA and put the interests of children first.

Senator Gloria Romero (Ret.), CA Director, Democrats for Education Reform

For too long, our public schools haven't been held accountable for providing students the high-quality education they deserve. Charter schools have led the way in improving public education in California by proving that poverty is not an excuse for low-performance and that a student's zip code shouldn't determine his or her destiny. They have shown great successes by holding themselves and their students to the highest expectations, raising the bar for all our schools. I congratulate CCSA for taking the lead on accountability by advocating that charter schools that are underperforming and not serving students well should be closed. I hope that we will ultimately hold all our public schools accountable to the high standard that the charter school community has set.

Michelle Rhee and Mayor Kevin Johnson, co-founders of the grassroots education reform movement StudentsFirst

Charters schools, in and of themselves, aren't the answer. Charters schools that work are. That's why charters, like all public schools, need to be held accountable to high standards. And when they fail to meet those standards we need to look for different ways to innovate. The bold step that the California Charter School Association took in demanding quality today unquestionably strengthened the charter school movement.

Anita Landecker, Executive Director, ExED

The California Charter Schools Association's (CCSA) call for non-renewal and closure of persistently underperforming charter schools is a clear indication of the Association's desire to ensure that California's charter schools are offering quality educational opportunities to all of the public school students charter schools serve. At ExED, we are committed to dramatically improving public education and closing the achievement gap by developing excellent charter schools, primarily in low-income communities. As such, we are encouraged by CCSA's leadership in both supporting and strengthening new and existing charter schools, and in taking on the one of the most complex and difficult issues within public education - that of recommending the closure of underperforming schools. We support these efforts and hope that others will join CCSA in this groundbreaking work to help the charter school movement demonstrate that it is serious about accountability and putting children first.

Yolie Flores, CEO, Communities for Teaching Excellence

I commend the California Charter Schools Association for showing courage and leadership in calling for high levels of accountability and quality -- including teacher quality -- within the charter school movement. As a strong supporter of charter schools and public school choice more broadly, I am committed to making sure that charter schools generate student outcomes that are measurably better than what has been previously available. While many charter schools are generating unprecedentedly positive results with students, others are not. In order to guarantee EVERY child a quality education -- a commitment of the charter school movement -- supporters of charter schools must show the proper resolve to ensure quality. With today's action, CCSA and its members are modeling how all public schools can and must embrace high levels of accountability in ways that keep student needs first.

Ben Austin, Executive Director, Parent Revolution

While high-quality charter schools have become vital alternatives to the status quo that traps thousands of students in failing schools, parents know that failing charter schools are just as bad for children as failing district schools. This is why I authored the first ever State Board regulations to shut down failing charter schools and why Parent Revolution endorsed SB645, Sen. Simitian's legislation to radically increase charter accountability in the state. By calling for authorizers to shut down persistently under-performing charter schools, the California Charter School Association (CCSA) is taking a courageous stance for the children of California, rather than the adults who pay their dues. We applaud CCSA for their kids-first approach to the important issue of accountability for their members. They have shown consistent leadership through their support for past accountability measures, and their action today is yet another important step in that direction. This is what the historic Parent Trigger law and the parent empowerment movement are about: holding all schools accountable to the families they serve - no matter what part of the education code they fall under.

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