CTA Questions & Answers

# Q. What is Kids Not Profits?

## **A:** It’s a public awareness campaign about charter schools, how they operate and the billionaires behind them in California who are spending millions of dollars to influence local school board elections statewide. Charter schools are privately-managed, taxpayer-funded schools exempted from some rules applicable to all other taxpayer-funded schools.

# Q: Why have educators started this public campaign now?

## **A:** Educators, parents and civil rights and community groups have been talking about the need for accountability and transparency of these privately-run charter schools for some time. CTA and other organizations have sponsored numerous pieces of legislation over the last few years. The Kids Not Profits issue advocacy campaign is telling that story. It’s also exposing the agenda of a group of billionaires with no experience in our classrooms, who support these privately-managed charter schools and are trying to push their education agenda on the rest of us. These billionaires have spent more than $11 million already this election trying to influence local school board and state legislative races.

The billionaire agenda calls for diverting money from California neighborhood public schools to privately-run charter schools without accountability to taxpayers, allowing these schools to cherry-pick which students attend these schools, and spending millions trying to influence local school board and legislative candidates who support these privately-managed schools.

# Q: Charter schools in California are public schools. How is it these privately-run charters are able to divert funding away from kids?

## **A:** Charter schools are taxpayer-funded but privately-managed. Because of weak oversight and a lack of transparency, charter schools have been exempted from some rules designed to protect students, families, communities, and taxpayers.

While these privately-run charter schools receive billions in California taxpayer dollars every year, not all of them comply with open meeting and open records laws so parents and taxpayers have full transparency and can see how the money is being spent. They are not required to enroll all students from the community, and they are not required to hire credentialed teachers. Every taxpayer dollar that is diverted to these privately-managed schools is money not spent improving neighborhood public schools.

Evidence shows that this lack of accountability has led to financial gains for private charter operators; has cost taxpayers millions in waste, fraud and abuse; and has led to harmful consequences for students.

# Q: How are anti-public education billionaires deceiving voters?

## **A:** They have set up at least three political action and independent expenditure committees to funnel their money. One committee is called the ‘Parent Teacher Alliance’ – which sounds like, but is NOT your local PTA. They claim to be about public education, but their real agenda is to divert money from California neighborhood public schools to privately-run charter schools without accountability to taxpayers. One of the billionaires even declared that elected school boards are obsolete and should be replaced with a system of non-profit corporations with appointed board members.

# Q: What is CTA doing to fix the laws that are keeping these deceptive practices from continuing?

## **A:** CTA and other civil rights and community organizations have sponsored and supported numerous pieces of legislation to ensure equal access for all students, transparency and accountability at charter schools.

AB 709 by Assembly Member Mike Gipson (D-Los Angeles) requires charter schools to be transparent and accountable to parents and taxpayers. It prohibits charter school operators, board members and their families from profiting from their schools, and requires them to comply with California’s open meetings, open records and conflict of interest laws. Assembly Bill 709 has been approved by the Legislature and sent to the governor. Educators, parents and community groups are calling on Governor Brown to sin this bill.

SB 322 by Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) would end the discriminatory admission requirements in place at many charter schools. The bill would end the common practice of charters cherry-picking the students they want and turning away students that need extra help, such as special education students, English learners or students with low academic performance. It also ensures uniform disciplinary actions for all students, by requiring charter schools to identify a list of acts for which students can be suspended or expelled, as well as setting a maximum length for suspensions. SB 322 died on the Assembly floor in the closing days of the legislative session.

# Q: What can California’s parents and communities do to take back ALL public schools and ensure taxpayers’ funds stay in our schools and all students have equal access to charter schools?

## **A:** Get informed and ask questions. Education and community activists across the country are fighting for higher standards and more accountability for charter schools to protect the public’s investment in these schools and ensure that students’ needs are being met.

With that in mind, last year the [Center for Popular Democracy](https://populardemocracy.org/) (CPD) put out [five questions about charter schools](http://educationvotes.nea.org/2015/01/23/the-5-questions-you-need-to-ask-about-charter-schools/) and how they operate. The CPD’s questions are:

1. How much money has the state lost to charter waste, fraud, and abuse?
2. Are charter operators required to establish strong business practices that guard against fraud, waste, mismanagement, and abuse? Do regulators in California have the authority and resources to regularly assess charter school business practices?
3. Does California require charter school operators and their boards of directors to provide adequate documentation to regulators ensuring funds are spent on student success?
4. Can the state adequately monitor the way charters spend public dollars including who charter operators are subcontracting with for public services?
5. Are online charter operators audited for quality of services provided to students and financial transparency?

With those questions in mind, CTA asks parents and community members to call on Governor Brown to support AB 709.

# Q: How much is CTA spending on this effort?

## **A:** We are spending about $1 million to run the radio ads in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento. We will never be able to compete with the deep pockets of these billionaires, but hope to let voters know their real agenda to divert money from neighborhood public schools to privately-managed charter schools without accountability to taxpayers, and expose their efforts to influence local school board and state legislative elections.