



AB 1478: Charter School Transparency and Accountability

Summary:

AB 1478 will ensure charter school governance is transparent and that monitoring and oversight of charter schools are conducted to protect public education and be in the best interest of our children.

Background:

Under the Ralph M. Brown Act and the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act all meetings of a legislative or state body of a local agency be open and public and all persons be permitted to attend, unless a closed session is authorized.

The California Public Records Act requires state and local agencies to make their records publically available.

Furthermore, existing law prohibits public officials from being financially interested in a contract made by them or by any board they are a member of.

The creation of charter schools was to revolutionize the public school system and produce better education results for our children. Yet, charter schools are publicly funded schools that do not have to comply with most of California's Education Code. While charter schools are unique, they are publicly funded. Charter schools were established with a promise: The freedom to innovate in exchange for results.

Need for legislation:

The ways that members of charter schools run and manage their board meetings has formed an opaque veil leading to concern. Additionally, the private meetings where members discuss spending and allocation of funds for the school programs and staff, specifically how tax

dollars are being spent, is cause for great concern for many members of California's communities.

It is necessary that all public schools receiving tax dollars are transparent in their intent to innovate the schools they manage and keep their spending explicit and available to the public. These are the same standards that other public schools are held to.

This bill:

AB 1478 expressly states that charter schools and entities managing charter schools would be subject to the California Public Records Act and the Ralph M. Brown Act, unless they are operated by an entity governed by the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.

Charter schools would be subject to the Political Reform Act of 1974 and would be considered an agency.

This bill specifies that a charter school must comply with the same open meeting, public records disclosure, and conflict of interest laws that govern public schools and school districts. Under this bill, contracts between members of a charter school's governing board and the schools they govern would be prohibited.

The bill authorizes employees of a charter school to serve as a member of the governing body. The bill prohibits members of the governing body from voting on, influencing or attempting to influence another member of the governing body regarding an individual's employment.

Support:

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