

AB 276 (Medina)

Accountability and Transparency in Charter Schools

Background

Charter schools were established with a promise: The freedom to innovate in exchange for results.

The creation of charter schools was intended to catalyze locally-driven experimentation, with a structure that could produce better academic results for all children.

While charter schools are unique, they are publicly funded, yet they lack the same transparency and accountability requirements that govern other publicly funded educational institutions, outlined in California's Education Code.

Furthermore, 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 must be open and public, 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 publicly available. Existing law prohibits public officials from being financially interested in a contract made by them or by any board they participate on as members.

Problem

The concern is that private meetings which members discuss spending and allocation of funds for school programs and staff, specifically how tax dollars are being spent, are causes of great concern for many members of California's communities.

More than \$149 million of public funds in California's charter school environment have been misused, often for questionable expenses or personal gain, according to a

March 2018 report by *In the Public Interest*, a research and policy center.

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

Solution

AB 276 would require that charter schools and entities managing charter schools are 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.

AB 276 would authorize employees of charter schools to serve as members of the governing body, but prohibit members of that body from attempting to influence another member regarding an individual's employment.

AB 276 would restrict contracts between members of a charter school's governing board and the schools they govern.

Support

California Teacher's Association (CTA) – Co-Sponsor

California School Boards Association (CSBA) – Co-Sponsor

California School Employees Association (CSEA)

California State PTA

Staff Contact

Emmanuel J. Aguayo
(916) 319-2061
emmanuel.aguayo@asm.ca.gov