

SB 1362 (Beall)
Local Control of Charter Schools
Managing Impact on Special Education and Neighborhood Public Schools
Fact Sheet

ISSUE

The charter act is now 25 years old, and it is past the time to revisit the policy and make modifications to give our local districts the tools they need to adequately assess the impacts new charter schools will have on the district.

Flaws in charter school law require approval of new schools regardless of their negative impact on a district's overall budget and can further erode vital support services for the remaining students. School board members are elected to be responsible stakeholders in determining the public educational programs that will best serve the students in their district. Unfortunately, they are not allowed to consider the impacts a new school will have on the local district's budget or the unexplored impacts to the delivery of special education services.

As the number of charter schools continues to grow, it is increasingly important for school districts to estimate and manage the costs associated with charter expansion, and consider the impacts new charter schools have on neighborhood public schools.

BACKGROUND

First established in 1992, the charter school act originally set a cap of 100 locally-driven experiment schools. Today, the charter school industry in California has grown to more than 1,200 charter schools. The system is shifting into one that prioritizes the growth opportunities for charter school operators over the educational opportunities for all students.

In school districts where new charter petitions are forced to be approved despite declining enrollment, district leaders are having very real conversations about laying off employees and closing schools. It is beyond reason that a school district struggling to maintain enrollment or to maintain a balanced budget should be mandated to approve new schools. This lack of local control and oversight are having significant consequences in school districts throughout the state.

Additionally, trends in enrollment of students with special education needs in charter schools has led to significant differences in the level of services provided by charter schools and the neighborhood public schools. School districts typically serve a larger and more diverse population of students with special education needs. This

often requires more intensive support, and puts additional funding strains on neighborhood public schools. The full financial impact of these developments requires closer inspection.

Statewide Charter Special Education Local Plan Areas have grown from a pilot program to now one formally working with more than 300 charter schools. About 1 in 4 charter schools statewide are served by a single Statewide Charter SELPA, and the number is likely to grow. While the rest of the state is underfunded and struggles to provide adequate resources to students with special education needs, some Statewide Charter SELPAs have a surplus of funds.

The state's priority must be to ensure the needs of all children are met, and more information is needed on the current disparity of services for students with special education needs between neighborhood public schools and charter schools.

THIS BILL

SB 1362 will require the Legislative Analyst Office to submit a report to the Legislature on the impact large Charter SELPAs have on special education services provided to all of California's students. Furthermore, this bill requires that charter schools demonstrate within their charter school petition how they will achieve a balance of pupils receiving special education services that is reflective of the general population residing within the school district.

Additionally, the bill promotes local control, and permits a charter school authorizer to deny a charter school petition based on the negative fiscal impact the proposed school would have on neighborhood public schools if the district has consistently declined in enrollment or has already approved similar charter school programs to the petition that are not at capacity.

STATUS/VOTES

Introduced February 16, 2018

SUPPORT

California Teachers Association

OPPOSITION

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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