SUMMARY

SB 808 ensures public accountability and transparency by providing local control over charter school petitions.

THIS BILL

This bill will require that a petition to establish a charter school be submitted and approved only by the local Board of Education in which the school will be located. It also eliminates the ability for charter petitioners to appeal a denial to the county board of education or the state board of education.

BACKGROUND

California’s charter school law was established in 1992 when these schools were expected to be only a small component of state systems of public education. A cap was originally established to limit charter schools to only 100 throughout the state. Although there are many charter schools that greatly benefit communities, the exponential growth of the charter school industry over the last twenty years has not coincided with increased oversight, and there is a need to revisit the impact of charter schools on neighborhood schools.

Charter schools provide an alternative to standard public education for many students. They offer more flexible and unique curriculums with teachers who utilize innovative methods to ensure their students are optimizing their talents. Although charter schools contribute to our state’s public education, there must still be oversight to ensure that children are receiving the best education possible.

A school board is elected to make decisions in the best interest of the children living in their district, and democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office. The establishment of charter schools in California was meant to allow local communities to innovate. Over the years, implementation charter schools have strayed from this. SB 808 ensures local control and accountability for charter schools.

CURRENT LAW

Currently, a charter school operator can go to the state, the county, or a local school district for approval of a charter school petition. The various entities have different capacities to oversee charters. Limiting which entities can approve charter petitions will help refocus the original intent of charter schools.

The law also allows a charter school to locate a facility in a school district other than the one it is authorized by under a very limited number of circumstances. When this occurs, school districts and charter schools often have differing interpretations of state law, difficulty in ensuring accountability.

The legislature intended charter schools to serve as laboratories of innovation and to provide lessons that show schools how to move public education forward on a path of constant improvement. SB 808 will work to further the original legislative intent.
STATUS

▪ Senate Education Committee
▪ Senate Judiciary Committee

SUPPORT

▪ California Teachers Association (Co-Sponsor)
▪ California Federation of Teachers (Co-Sponsor)
▪ United Teachers Los Angeles

OPPOSITION

▪ California Charter Schools Association

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Candice Jackson
Office of Senator Tony Mendoza
(916) 651-4032