



April 2, 2019

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell  
Chair, Assembly Education Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 159  
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: AB 1505 (O'Donnell, Bonta, McCarty, Smith) as amended on April 1, 2019 – OPPOSE**

Dear Chairman O'Donnell:

On behalf of the EdVoice Board of Directors, I write to express our opposition to AB 1505, which would remove any meaningful right of appeal for charter school petitioners and eliminate the objective, specific review criteria used by charter school authorizers. This bill would weaken the renewal and authorizing process and dampen the autonomy that is fundamental to charter schools and the success they have had on improving outcomes for many of California's disadvantaged students.

Instead of focusing on thoughtful improvements to quality charter school authorizing, AB 1505 gives sweeping approval and closure power to local school districts with no objective criteria to guide a fair, rigorous review process. This bill would allow a district to deny a new charter, revoke an existing charter or not renew an existing charter if the district believes the charter school has a negative financial, facility or academic impact on the neighborhood or the district. This provides no objective criteria about the quality or need for the school and, moreover, it is unclear what kind of evidence would be required to substantiate the belief that a charter had a negative impact on the district. This allows school districts to reject a charter petition for reasons that have absolutely nothing to do with student needs, parent preference, school quality or proven student academic outcomes – but, of course, a charter school could not appeal such a decision.

AB 1505 would also require that the nearly 40 state-approved charter schools close or seek local authorization, regardless of their quality, effectiveness or the academic outcomes of their students. This would clearly disrupt the lives of thousands of students, teachers, families and communities.

This bill also eliminates charter schools' current teacher credentialing flexibility, a key part of charter schools' instructional autonomy and innovative instructional practices. It also requires a charter school to be held to a quota for students with disabilities. This is misguided – arbitrary quotas for students with disabilities can result in both the underidentification of students with disabilities or the over-identification of students with disabilities. In both of those circumstances, a prescribed quota from Sacramento is at the heart of the decisionmaking, not the best interest of a child.

Notably, AB 1505 also eliminates the current requirement in law that a chartering authority consider increases in student academic achievement as the “most important factor” in determining charter renewal or revocation. Removing this crucial component of charter accountability weakens the authorizing process and the notion that objective accountability exists in these decisions. Furthermore, whether or

not a charter school is closing achievement gaps would no longer be of consequence to a chartering authority – a highly concerning outcome for disadvantaged students whose families look to charter schools to provide more opportunities for them.

Instead of advancing the best interests of students, AB 1505 imposes one-sided solutions with no regard for research or empirical evidence. This will not improve the charter authorizing process nor outcomes for California's children. Unfortunately, it may only lead to more students trapped in failing schools.

We strongly encourage you to oppose AB 1505.

If you have any questions regarding our position, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bill Lucia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Lucia" clearly distinguishable.

Bill Lucia  
President & CEO

Cc: The Honorable Rob Bonta, Assembly Member, 18<sup>th</sup> District  
The Honorable Kevin McCarty, Assembly Member, 7<sup>th</sup> District  
The Honorable Christy Smith, Assembly Member, 38<sup>th</sup> District  
Members, Assembly Committee on Education