



Arizona State Legislature
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

July 20, 2021

Chair Rosa DeLauro
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro:

At a time when nearly 22 percent of Arizona families are choosing public charter schools for their child's education, we as members of the Arizona Legislature are firmly opposed to language included in the Fiscal Year 2022 House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill released on July 11. Specifically, Section 314, which reads as follows:

None of the funds made available by this Act or any other Act may be awarded to a charter school that contracts with a for-profit entity to operate, oversee or manage the activities of the school.

As you know, this specific language singles out one type of public school – charter schools. Moreover, it threatens charter schools with the loss of federal funding if they contract with a private company. Unfortunately, this language is so poorly drafted that merely contracting with a local catering company for food services could jeopardize a charter school's Title I, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and National School Lunch Program funding, even though a district public school might be doing the same thing.

We strongly urge Congress to remove this harmful section. According to the Arizona Charter School Association, for the 2020 school year, a record 213,822 students attended one of 556 Arizona charter schools. Each year over the past decade, Arizona charter schools have increased enrollment by adding 10,000 students.

Throughout the school year, both public charter and district schools rely on private entities to support the students. Charter schools were created to be both innovative and competitive, while trying to direct as many taxpayer dollars to its classrooms and away from administrative overhead. It is worth noting both district schools and charter schools *sometimes* contract with:

- local transportation providers to provide ride services for its student;
- local catering companies to provide meals;
- private entities to teach leadership courses to teachers and administrators; and
- virtual educational platforms for online learning when the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in-person learning last year.

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We all know the past 16 months have been challenging for everyone. Arizona's public charter schools have continued to deliver the very best education to its students. Instead of cutting these designated taxpayer dollars, we are asking you to restore them.

Enrollment rates for Arizona's public charter schools grew during the pandemic. By singling out charter schools, as Section 314 does, Arizona's charter schools could face closure due to lack of financial resources leaving families and students in without higher-quality options for education, especially for minorities. Arizona's charter schools reflect Arizona's rich and diverse demographics. Arizona public charter schools serve higher percentages of African American, Asian, and multiracial students than public district schools. During the 2019-2020 school year, 59 percent of Arizona charter school students identified in racial and ethnic groups other than white.

In addition to the language outlined under Section 314, this same Appropriations bill would also cut funding from \$440 million to \$400 million for the Charter Schools Program (CSP) which is aimed at supporting the expansion of successful charter schools. President Biden's Fiscal Year 2022 budget requested \$440 million for CSP and this budget falls short, despite a 40 percent overall increase in education funding.

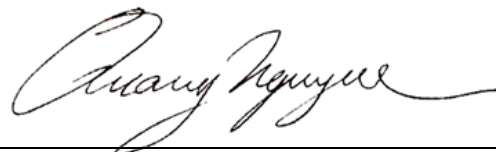
At a time when Arizona charter schools have significantly raised the bar academically, we strongly implore the Committee, and all Members of Congress, to restore full funding to charter schools. Eight out of Arizona's top 10 public high schools are charter schools according to the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* rankings of public high schools in Arizona. From 2015 to 2018, charter schools throughout Arizona had higher Az Merit pass rates than the state district average. In addition, every racial and ethnic subgroup of students passed higher pass rates in charter schools than their district peers.

The Arizona Legislature recently concluded its 2021 session. As lawmakers, we substantially increased state education funding by expanding access to high-quality schools. We hope you will not diminish Arizona's successes to advance a political agenda which reduces parent empowerment and puts the interests of children behind that of school union leaders. Please do not interfere with our state's school finance funding system.

Sincerely,



Representative Shawna LM Bolick (LD 20)



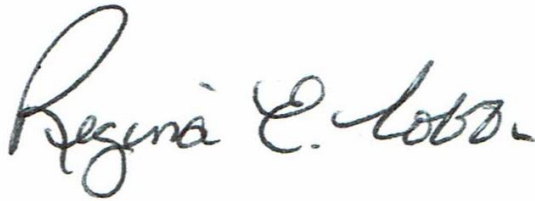
Representative Quang Nguyen (LD 1)



Senator Rick Gray (LD 21)



Representative Walt Blackman (LD 6)




Representative Regina Cobb (LD 5)



Senator Thomas "TJ" Shope (LD 8)



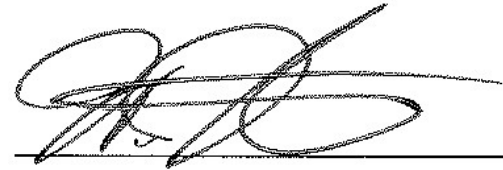
Senator Wendy Rogers (LD 6)



Senator Kelly Townsend (LD 16)



Senator Nancy Barto (LD 15)



Senator Warren Petersen (LD 12)



Representative Becky Nutt (LD 14)



Representative Bret Roberts (LD 11)



Representative Frank Carroll (LD 22)



Representative Ben Toma (LD 22)



Representative Kevin Payne (LD 21)



Representative Steve Kaiser (LD 15)



Representative Beverly Pingerelli (LD 21)



Representative John Fillmore (LD 16)

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cc:

U.S. Senator Kyrsten Sinema

U.S. Senator Mark Kelly

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona

Congressman Andy Biggs

Congressman Ruben Gallego

Congressman Paul Gosar

Congressman Raúl Grijalva

Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick

Congresswoman Debbie Lesko

Congressman Tom O'Halleran

Congressman David Schweikert

Congressman Greg Stanton