



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO

17 South High Street, Suite 650 • Columbus, Ohio 43215

Phone (614) 469-1505 • Fax (614) 469-7918

www.lwvohio.org

Letter to Members of the Conference Committee on House Bill 2

October 5, 2015

RE: House Bill 2 (Dovilla/Roegner)

Dear Members of the Conference Committee on House Bill 2: Representatives Bill Hayes, Ron Amstutz, and Teresa Fedor; Senators Peggy Lehner, Cliff Hite, and Tom Sawyer;

The League of Women Voters of Ohio (League) urges the Conference Committee on HB 2 to retain the minimal accountability requirements for charter schools, sponsors, governing boards, and management companies outlined in Sub. HB 2 as approved by the Ohio Senate.

The League believes that HB 2 is a first step in efforts to increase the accountability and responsiveness of charter schools to the taxpayers of Ohio.

Specifically the League supports the following provisions in Sub. HB 2:

- Limiting sponsor switching and sponsors selling services.
- Clarifying the contract between governing authorities and sponsors.
- Strengthening the law regarding the membership of governing boards.
- Increasing the requirements of governing boards, including adopting an annual budget, employing an attorney independent from the school's operator, and providing the public with information about governing board members.
- Increasing the requirements of sponsors, including the definition of monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance.
- Increasing the requirements for fiscal officers, including requiring the fiscal officer to execute a bond.
- Requiring governing boards to participate in training on public records and open meetings law.
- Strengthening requirements for internet-based schools, including the requirement that e-schools keep accurate records of each student's participation in learning opportunities.
- Strengthening the definition and requirements for blended learning.
- Strengthening the sponsor contract with regard to closing a community school and community schools switching sponsors.
- Clarifying the sponsor rating system, and the consequences for "ineffective" sponsors.
- Strengthening the requirements for operators, including clarifying the contact between governing authority and operator; making public information about operators, their contracts, performance, and detailed accounting of spending over 20 percent of gross

annual revenues.

- Eliminating the appeal process when a governing authority notifies an operator of its intent to terminate or not renew the operator's contract. The current process ironically allows an operator of a community school to replace its governing board under certain circumstances. ORC 3314.026.
- Strengthening reporting requirements for the Ohio Department of Education about community school closures.
- Strengthening requirements for documenting students who are habitual or chronic truants.

The League would oppose efforts to weaken the sponsor evaluation.

The bill requires a study of the California "similar students measure," which could replace Ohio's value added measure in sponsor evaluations. But, Patrick O'Donnell in *The Plain Dealer* writes that Ohio's value-added measure more accurately tracks individual student achievement, unlike the California measure, and that the California Charter Schools Association "wouldn't pick it over Ohio's value-added measure."¹

Another proposal, offered by some charter school operators, would count the performance of low and high enrollment charter schools the same in sponsor evaluations. That could mean that a sponsor could be rated "exemplary" and qualify for additional state funds and perks, even though it sponsored a low performing school (rated "F") with an enrollment of 15,000 students. Weighting charter schools based on their enrollment ensures that student outcomes count in the sponsor evaluation.²

The League also requests that the conference committee amend the bill in the following areas:

- Include SB20 (Schiavoni) Record Keeping and SB59 (Skindell) Defines Public/Private Funds
- Prohibit for-profit management companies
- Enact a fair and transparent method to fund community schools
- Require that community schools comply with the same standards as traditional public schools.

Sincerely,

Joan Platz
LWV Ohio Education Specialist

¹ O'Donnell, Patrick, "California charters, like researchers, like Ohio school rating plan better than theirs", *The Plain Dealer*, July 22, 2015. Retrieved at http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2015/07/california_charters_like_researchers_like_ohio_school_rating_plan_better_than_theirs.html

² O'Donnell, Patrick, "E-School giant ECOT, with 1500 students, wants to count the same as tiny charter schools in state evaluations," *The Plain Dealer*, September 23, 2015. http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2015/09/e-school_giant_ecot_with_15000_students_wants_to_count_the_same_as_tiny_charter_schools_in_state_evaluations.html