

Dear Chair Cwodzinski and members of the committee.

**Introduction**

My name is Wendy Swanson Choi and I am Executive Director of Novation Education Opportunities (NEO), a charter school authorizer that currently authorizes 30 public charter schools currently serving almost 10,000 students.

- NEO's mission is to authorize and oversee charter schools through consistent, ongoing and robust evaluation to achieve significant and measurable student growth.
- 50% of the schools that NEO authorizes are led by leaders of color and represent diverse communities including immigrant communities critical to Minnesota's future workforce.
- Schools that NEO authorizes have a track record of outperforming the districts in which they are located when disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

**NEO would like to make three main points related to SF1311.**

1. Minnesota has a strong authorizer and public charter school accountability structure in place.
  - The authorizer duties are detailed in statutes. The Education Commissioner evaluates authorizers. If an authorizer doesn't meet standards, the Education Commissioner can sanction the authorizer and can also close the authorizer.
  - Authorizers evaluate the academic, operational and financial performance of charter schools. If a charter school doesn't meet standards, an authorizer can require corrective action and can close a charter school.
2. Last session, authorizers worked within the sector to pass more than 50 new public charter school regulations to address issues that had been identified over the past several years. We are currently working with the schools that we authorize to ensure compliance with the new regulations from last session.
3. The provisions set forth in **SF1311** strengthen the accountability structure by improving authorizer capacity and oversight, build on the regulations passed last session, and improve transparency.
  - The bill will require the Minnesota Department of Education to provide annual training to authorizers which NEO supports for continuous improvement.
  - The bill will also require authorizers be present at charter school finance committee meetings to more closely oversee, monitor, and evaluate financial performance, which NEO also supports.
  - And the bill will require authorizers to post the charter school contract for each school that they authorize on their website, which NEO supports.

## **NEO has concerns about a potential moratorium bill.**

Finally, we want to express our concern about a potential moratorium bill which doesn't make sense.

- Data shows that many students are stuck in the lowest levels of achievement in large district schools that have been around for decades.
- Families enroll their students in a public charter school because their children weren't successful in a large district school for a variety of reasons.
- Please continue to support families of students who are failing, to access a better learning environment for their children.
- Please don't limit their opportunities for success.
- Please help Minnesota continue to reach underserved students to develop a strong and sustainable workforce.

## **Closing**

In addition to the more than 50 public charter school accountability regulations passed last session, **SF1311** supports authorizer and school success by requiring more authorizer training, additional authorizer monitoring and oversight, and more transparency.

We encourage you to support authorizer, public charter school, and student success rather than make it harder for families to access a better learning environment for their children.

Thank you for your attention.



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