

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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Charter School Reform Poll

Introduction

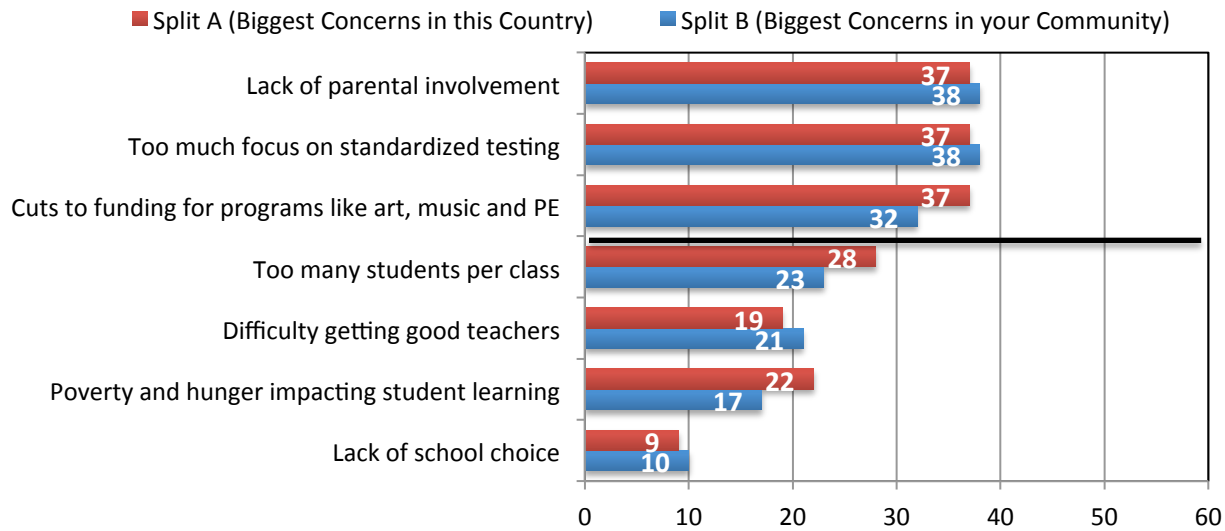
A new survey shows that Americans overwhelmingly favor a series of proposals to reform charter schools. Proposals garnering broad support include initiatives to strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, prevent fraud, serve high-need students and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

The following are key findings from the national poll of 1,000 registered voters, which was conducted January 25th – 29th, 2015:

Key Findings

- **Voters have positive views of their public schools and public school teachers.** Sixty-three percent of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood excellent or good, while just 29 percent rate them fair or poor. Voters are more likely to say public schools in their neighborhood are getting better (31 percent) than getting worse (16 percent), while a 42 percent plurality are not seeing much change either way. By more than 6:1, voters are more likely to have favorable than unfavorable views of public school teachers (68 percent favorable – 11 percent unfavorable).
- **Lack of school choice does not register as a top concern.** Voters focus on lack of parental involvement, too much focus on standardized tests, cuts to school funding, and class size as the biggest problems facing K-through-12 education. Lack of school choice ranks dead last on their list of concerns.
- **Voters expressed mixed views on charter schools with a majority opposing expansion of charters.** With no description, 44 percent favor charter schools, 18 percent oppose them and 38 percent do not have enough information to form an opinion. After a neutral description, 52 percent favor charter schools, while 38 percent oppose them. At the same time, 62 want to keep the number of charter schools the same or reduce the number of charter schools in their area, while 29 percent want to increase the number of charter schools in their area.

Top Concerns: Lack of Parental Involvement, Over-Emphasis on Testing, and Funding Cuts



- **Voters have limited awareness of charter schools and while they support charter schools, they don’t want to expand them.** When simply asked their opinion about charter schools, 44 percent favor charter schools, 18 percent oppose them and 38 percent do not have enough information to form an opinion. At the same time, 62 want to keep the number of charter schools the same or reduce the number of charter schools in their area, while 29 percent want to increase the number of charter schools in their area.
- **Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Huge majorities of voters favor proposals to strengthen transparency and accountability, teacher training and qualifications, anti-fraud measures, ensuring high-need students are served and making sure neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

	Total Support %
Transparency & Accountability	
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to open board meetings to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings	89
Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds	88
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to release to parents and the public how they spend taxpayer money , including their annual budgets and contracts	86
Protect Neighborhood Schools	
Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area	78

Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools	72
Protect Taxpayer funds	
Require charter schools to return taxpayer money to the school district for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year	79
Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement	71
Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.	65
Prohibit charter schools from spending taxpayer dollars on advertising or marketing.	56
High quality education for every child	
Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements	89
Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.	80

In addition, the poll found broad strong bi-partisan support for these reforms and by both supporters and opponents of charter schools.

<i>Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to open board meetings to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	88	11
Independents	89	10
Republicans	91	6
People Who Favor Charter Schools	90	9
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	87	10
<i>Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to release to parents and the public how they spend taxpayer money, including their annual budgets and contracts.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	80	15
Independents	89	8
Republicans	87	11
People Who Favor Charter Schools	89	8
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	91	8

<i>Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	90	8
Independents	89	10
Republicans	88	10
People Who Favor Charter Schools	88	11
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	93	6
<i>Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an analysis of the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	78	19
Independents	71	27
Republicans	69	26
People Who Favor Charter Schools	68	29
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	90	10
<i>Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	89	8
Independents	75	20
Republicans	71	27
People Who Favor Charter Schools	74	22
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	90	10

<i>Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	85	10
Independents	78	19
Republicans	78	18
People Who Favor Charter Schools	78	19
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	87	11
<i>Require charter schools to return taxpayer money to the school district for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose

Democrats	79	18
Independents	79	18
Republicans	80	17
People Who Favor Charter Schools	75	22
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	90	9

<i>Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	76	18
Independents	71	23
Republicans	66	28
People Who Favor Charter Schools	65	28
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	85	12
<i>Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the same training and qualification requirements.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	94	4
Independents	88	9
Republicans	87	11
People Who Favor Charter Schools	86	11
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	95	4

<i>Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from financially benefiting from their schools.</i>		
	Favor	Oppose
Democrats	72	23
Independents	64	31
Republicans	60	34
People Who Favor Charter Schools	64	31
People Who Oppose Charter Schools	76	20

Methodology

GBA Strategies conducted a national poll of 1,000 registered voters January 25-29, 2015 on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a national voter file and phone numbers were selected randomly, providing a statistically representative sample. The poll was administered by professional interviewers via telephone with respondents being reached on cell phones and landlines.