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Gov. Wolf's Charter School Accountability Plan Saves Nearly \$280 Million

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf's commonsense plan to improve the educational quality of charter schools and control rising costs will save nearly \$280 million a year, the governor told the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators today. The governor has a three-part plan to fix Pennsylvania's charter school law which is regarded as one of the worst in the nation.

"Every student deserves a great education, whether in a traditional public school or a charter school, but the state's flawed and outdated charter school law is failing children, parents, and taxpayers," said Governor Wolf. "Pennsylvania has a history of school choice, which I support, but there is widespread agreement that we must change the law to prioritize quality and align funding to actual costs."

"My plan will hold charter schools accountable so parents and students have a high-quality option that prepares students for success and protects taxpayers."

Taxpayers spent \$1.8 billion on charter schools last year, including more than \$500 million on cyber schools. The rising cost of charter schools is draining funding from traditional public schools, which has forced cuts to classroom programs and property tax increases.

The governor's proposal would save school districts an estimated \$280 million a year by better aligning charter school funding to actual costs. The plan caps online cyber school tuition payments and applies the special education funding formula to charter schools, as it does for traditional public schools, as recommended by a bipartisan Special Education Funding Commission. The Wolf administration met with legislators, school districts, charter schools, and other stakeholders to develop the plan.

Despite costing \$1.8 billion a year, charter schools have little public oversight and no publicly elected school board. For-profit companies that manage many charter schools are not required to have independent financial audits.

"There are high-quality charter schools, but some of them, especially some cyber charter schools, are underperforming," said Governor Wolf. "The inequities are not fair to students in charter schools or to the children in traditional public schools. It's time for change."

A [Stanford University report](#) found overwhelmingly negative results from Pennsylvania's cyber schools and urged reform. Eleven of the 15 cyber schools in the state are on the Department of Education's list of low performing schools. The Achieving Community Transformation Academy, the lowest performing cyber school in Pennsylvania, will close by the end of December.

In addition to legislation, the governor's plan includes executive action and overhauling regulations. The Department of Education is using a [fee-for-service model](#) to recoup the costs of thousands of staff hours to implement the Charter School Law. The department is also [developing new regulations](#) for charter schools that will prioritize educational quality and transparency.

Many education stakeholders are supporting the governor's charter school accountability plan including the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, Education Voters of Pennsylvania, Research for Action, American Federation of Teachers Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania State Education Association, as well as numerous superintendents and school board members.

Comments about the proposed charter school regulations can be submitted to: Office of the Secretary, 333 Market Street, 10th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126.

Note: Photos and video from this event will be available at www.pacast.com.

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