

# Comment Report

Education

Date: 03/03/2021

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: Law Library

**Name:** Joe Stutting

**Comment:** As you consider the school choice bills today, please consider the longterm impact on the state budgets as these programs expand. You only need to look at Wisconsin to know the future financial impacts. If this is truly about school choice, then any school receiving public money should provide all the services that any child would need. Including special education, ell, and atrisk.

**Name:** Robert Szalay

**Comment:** School Choice helps the kids that need it most. Those that come from families that are less financially capable. We need to support these families. Families with means are already taking full advantage of school choice, because they can afford to move to a better school district or because they are choosing to pay for nonpublic or homeschool. It is time that the State Legislature stop pandering to special interest groups and finally support the kids that need it most. STO has proven that there is demand. Recent polling shows that Iowans favor more Choice. The only ones that don't support choice are the ones that are calling for more statusquo. We can do better than the statusquo in Iowa. Remember that not all kids learn the same. There needs to be options, other than Public District Schools, for the kids that need something different. School Choice Works! Everywhere it has been tried, the education system improves. Kids do better! School Choice = Freedom for Iowa families

**Name:** Randy Richardson

**Comment:** HSB242 is a bad bill. Charter schools have been around for years and the research of their impact on education is mixed at best. What we do know is that there are a significant number of charter school operators who have been forced to shut down because of financial and performance issues. We need to keep those people out of Iowa. Some people think charter schools will be effective because they don't have to follow all of the state mandates. Using that logic then it would simply make sense to remove those same mandates for all public schools so that they too can flourish.

**Name:** Chris Rolwes

**Comment:** Iowa does NOT need more school choice. We do not need more public dollars being siphoned away from our chronically underfunded public schools. The Republican majority continues to point to the increase in SSA as their commitment to public education. On the surface, that is true but the amount of student supplemental aid has not been enough to keep up with inflation or the many other needs that our urban school districts have. Those that support private school vouchers have yet to point to a state where this is improved educational outcomes for students. We need to stop the corporate giveaways to Iowa Connections Academy and other for profit educational institutions. Again, public dollars need to go to public school students. The other major part of this bill that troubles me are that private schools will be able to take these tax payer dollars with little oversight and without having to report the educational outcomes of these students. Please vote no on this bill.

**Name:** Linda Craddick

**Comment:** As an Iowa taxpayer, I am concerned about the diversion of MY money being used

for charter/private school vouchers got institutions that do not have to follow the same rules or offer the same transparency required of public schools. States that currently have ESA/Vouchers for education ALL rank well below Iowa in quality of education, and Charter Schools notoriously score lower than public schools in general. Why are you even considering giving MY tax money to a program with a known failure rate? Have you even considered that 2/3 of Iowa School Districts don't even have a private school district in which a student could use a voucher? That means that people who don't even have that option available are having their state tax dollars diverted out of their home schools and out of their districts all together. This is completely wrong. It makes no sense whatsoever, and it is not in the best interest of the children of Iowa. Moves like these are the reason that so many 20 and 30somethings are moving out of the state. They want to raise families in states where public education is highly valued, and Iowa has begun to not fit that bill in many ways. Don't let this funding be the nail in the coffin for our state.

**Name:** Sarah Johnston

**Comment:** I am a mom of three children. Two of whom attend public school and one who attends private school, so I've seen both sides and I understand the premise behind this idea that parents shouldn't be "stuck" with a public school simply because they can't afford to send their children to a private or charter school. But I also understand the realities. For most people, sending their student to a private or charter school isn't an option because there isn't one. And if there is one, there is often financial aid to apply for that helps lessen the burden. If we allow vouchers, we are taking money away from our public schools who service a majority of the students in Iowa. They are already doing so much and doing the best they can, squeezing everything they can out of the dollars they are given and this will put them in a spot where they need to start looking at what they can do away with which gives them an unfair disadvantage so that some kids (because we certainly aren't talking about all kids because of logistics) can have the option for a private or charter school. The REALITY of this bill is that it will hurt more Iowans than it will help and that's not something ANY of you should be okay with.

**Name:** Cindy Garlock

**Comment:** The Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Directors would like to express concern with House Study Bill 242, legislation that modifies the manner in which charter schools may be established in Iowa. As the bill currently stands, there are two methods for establishing a charter school: (1) by the action of the local school board and (2) by an outside entity, referred to as a founding group. Our primary objection to HSB 242 lies with the second option. We believe that local education decisions are best made by duly elected school board members. As elected representatives of the people, we are accountable for all aspects of student learning, along with the responsible use of resources, including financial resources, facilities and personnel. By allowing founding groups to establish charter schools, local control and accountability is lost. There is no local recourse for the community, for families and for taxpayers. There is no local oversight. Often, these founding groups are organizations from outside the community, perhaps even organizations that are forprofit in nature. This possibility raises questions about the use of taxpayer funds to support a commercial enterprise. Especially when that enterprise has no local oversight of the use of those public monies. While we understand that the Department of Education would be involved in oversight, it is our opinion that local school boards are best suited to understand the needs of the local community and be responsive to those needs in a manner that is more difficult and less effective from a state level. And, as elected officials, our community has the ability to to express their level of support or opposition to our decisions at the ballot box. Officials at the Department of Education are not accountable to the voters. We believe that our public tax dollars should remain under the oversight of elected boards, not a founding group. Along with our concern regarding the establishment of charter schools by founding groups, we would also voice concern regarding the success of

charters in Iowa and across the country. Research indicates that communities with charter schools in place show little, if any, significant improvement in learning. Perhaps there are more innovative and successful approaches to increase student engagement and achievement that also allow us to provide public accountability. House Study Bill 242 is not in the best interest of school districts. Local oversight and accountability would be diminished if this legislation were to be enacted.

**Name:** Cindy Garlock

**Comment:** The Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Directors would like to urge you to defeat House Study Bill 243. Any type of scholarship fund, voucher or education savings account would be detrimental to the public schools of Iowa. This legislation would weaken support for public school students. Rather than shifting scarce resources away from public schools, the State of Iowa should be promoting and fully investing taxpayer resources in public schools. Our public schools are held to high standards mandated by the state and federal government. Public schools are provided oversight by locally elected school boards. These boards are accountable to the public, unlike the governing bodies of private schools. Establishing a voucher program, even in this limited capacity, will lead to decreased funding for our public schools. It is our position that public tax dollars should be used to fund public schools. And only public schools. Unlike private schools, public schools provide a free education to all students, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Unlike private schools, public schools must follow all guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Individual with Disabilities Education Act. Unlike private schools, public schools must provide accountability and transparency to their community and to the State of Iowa. Private schools are not universally accessible by Iowa families. This legislation would benefit a few, at the expense of the many. Rather than diverting tax dollars to private entities, it is imperative to provide our public school with the resources they need. Public school funding has not kept up with costs in recent years. Our public schools need additional funding, not fewer resources. We believe that Iowa public schools provide a strong educational experience for all students. And that taxpayer funds should only be used for public education. House Study Bill 243 does not serve the majority of the families of Iowa and we encourage you to vote no on this legislation.