

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT[281]

Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 281—Chapter 19
“Charter Schools”

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 256E.4(2)
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2754

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

November 17, 2026
8 to 9 a.m.

Room B50
Grimes State Office Building
Online at meet.google.com/uzu-nfiq-jca
Phone: 1.929.276.1400
PIN: 992 943 978#

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department of Education no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

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400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Phone: 515.281.8661
Email: thomas.a.mayes@iowa.gov

Purpose and Summary

This proposed rulemaking implements several provisions of 2026 Iowa Acts, House File 2754. This proposed rulemaking addresses the addition of the University of Northern Iowa as a charter school authorizer and elimination of a legacy Iowa Code chapter.

References to Iowa Code chapters 256E and 256F are to those chapters as amended by House File 2754.

Analysis of Impact

1. Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

Charter school leaders will benefit from the additional authorization pathway, and the charter school community will benefit from the simplicity of the proposed rules.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

Charter school leaders will benefit from the additional authorization pathway, and the charter school community will benefit from the simplicity of the proposed rules.

2. Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

The quantitative impact is unknown.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

There is no known qualitative impact.

3. Costs to the State:

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

The costs to the State are unknown. There is no additional cost anticipated to the Department. The Fiscal Note for Division I of House File 2754 found that the underlying legislation has an unknown fiscal impact.

- **Anticipated effect on State revenues:**

The proposed rulemaking is not anticipated to have a direct effect on State revenues.

4. Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:

Iowa Code chapter 256E requires rulemaking.

5. Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:

Iowa Code chapter 256E requires rulemaking.

6. Alternative methods considered by the agency:

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

No other methods were seriously considered by the Department since the method proposed is the most cost-efficient and seamless for all entities involved.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

Iowa Code chapter 256E requires rulemaking.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.

- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.

- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.

- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.

- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

The proposed rulemaking is not expected to have an impact on small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Amend rule 281—19.1(256E) as follows:

281—19.1(256E) General. All charter schools in Iowa are a part of the state's program of public education. Charter schools established on or after July 1, 2021, are subject to Iowa Code chapter 256E, subchapter I, and Division I of this chapter. Charter schools established prior to July 1,

2021, continue to operate under and are subject to the provisions of Iowa Code chapter ~~256F~~ 256E, subchapter II, and Division II of this chapter. The department monitors the effectiveness of charter schools and implements the applicable provisions of this chapter.

ITEM 2. Amend rule 281—19.2(256E) as follows:

281—19.2(256E) Establishment of charter schools. A charter school may be established by either of the following methods: a school board-state board model, pursuant to Iowa Code section 256E.4, or a founding group-state board model, pursuant to Iowa Code section 256E.5. The state board of education and the University of Northern Iowa are the only authorizers of charter schools in the state. The state board of education is the only authorizer of charter schools under this division. Charter schools authorized by the University of Northern Iowa are governed by such rules the university may establish.

ITEM 3. Amend paragraph **19.14(1)“e”** as follows:

e. Student achievement, including annual academic growth and proficiency, including data from the Iowa statewide summative assessment of student progress (ISASP) data, administered pursuant to 281—paragraph 12.8(1)“h,” other assessment data, and aggregate assessment test scores.

ITEM 4. Amend rule 281—19.15(256E) as follows:

281—19.15(256E) Operation of existing charter schools. Charter schools established pursuant to Iowa Code chapter ~~256F~~ 256E, subchapter II, continue to operate pursuant to that ~~Iowa Code chapter~~ subchapter and are not subject to the requirements of this division or Iowa Code chapter 256E, subchapter I.

ITEM 5. Rescind the implementation sentence in **281—Chapter 19**, division I.

ITEM 6. Amend rule 281—19.16(256F) as follows:

281—19.16(~~256F~~ 256E) Definitions. The definitions in Iowa Code section ~~256F.2~~ 256E.21 apply to this division. In addition, “advisory council” means a council appointed by the school board of a charter school. With respect to a charter school, no more than one member of the council may be a member of the school board; a district’s school improvement advisory committee may also serve as its advisory council. All advisory councils are subject to the provisions of Iowa Code chapters 21 and 22.

“*Family unit*” means a household in which resides one or more students enrolled at the existing public school that is the subject of a charter school application.

ITEM 7. Amend rule 281—19.17(256F) as follows:

281—19.17(~~256F~~ 256E) Operating requirements. Charter schools are governed by Iowa Code sections ~~256F.4(2) through (8), 256F.6, and 256F.7~~ 256E.23(2) through 256E.23(8), 256E.25, and 256E.26.

ITEM 8. Amend rule 281—19.18(256F) as follows:

281—19.18(~~256F~~ 256E) Ongoing review by the department. The department periodically reviews each charter school to ensure continuing compliance with the charter school’s contract. The department may schedule mandatory meetings with the administrators of all charter schools at the department’s sole discretion. Iowa Code section ~~256F.10~~ 256E.29 governs necessary reports under this division.

ITEM 9. Amend rule 281—19.19(256F) as follows:

281—19.19(~~256F~~ 256E) Renewal of charter. The school board that established the charter school, in the absence of revoking the charter pursuant to rule 281—19.20(~~256F~~ 256E), takes affirmative action to renew a charter school contract after the initial four-year contract for a charter school and at the

end of each renewal period. The school board shall hold a public hearing on the issue of renewal and submit to the department a copy of the minutes of the public hearing showing that a majority of the school board members voted in favor of renewal of the charter. Any action to renew a charter specifies the number of years, which may only be four years or less, for which the charter was renewed by the school board.

A school board will submit a new application to the department if the board modifies any of the terms of the original charter.

ITEM 10. Amend rule 281—19.20(256F) as follows:

281—19.20(~~256F~~ 256E) Revocation or nonrenewal of charter. Iowa Code sections ~~256F.8 and 256F.9~~ 256E.27 and 256E.28 govern revocation or nonrenewal of a charter under this division.

ITEM 11. Amend rule 281—19.21(256F) as follows:

281—19.21(~~256F~~ 256E) Transition—operation of existing charter schools. Charter schools established pursuant to this division and Iowa Code chapter ~~256F~~ 256E, subchapter II, prior to July 1, 2021, may continue to operate pursuant to those terms and are not subject to Iowa Code chapter 256E, subchapter I, or Division I of this chapter. No new charter ~~or innovation-zone~~ school may be created under this division.

ITEM 12. Amend **281—Chapter 19**, implementation sentence, as follows:

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapter ~~256F~~ 256E, subchapter II.