**UEN Statement to HSB 242 Subcommittee**March 2, 2021

UEN is registered opposed to [**HSB 242**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=89&ba=hsb242) **Charter Schools,** primarily opposed to the Founding Group Model beginning on Page 8, titled subsection 5. This is the second chartering option by which outside entities may contract directly with the State Board of Education without school board approval.

Urban schools are concerned that outside entities might create a charter school, for seemingly noble purposes, maybe a STEAM academy, or a Career and Technical or college prep program, or simply to engage with a disgruntled community group upset about changing attendance center boundaries or the fiscal decision to close a neighborhood school due to budget constraints.

Charter schools, when chartered by outside entities, especially when contracting with private chartering companies to manage the operations of the charter school, lose much of the transparency and oversight that Iowa taxpayers expect and deserve from their locally elected school boards spending public dollars.

We believe that additional flexibilities for locally elected school boards may be of benefit. Flexibility to innovate and freedom from regulations and restricted funding streams would be very helpful. Those provisions in HSB 240 might be enough to satisfy this urge for innovation and smaller local schools that the charter school movement envisioned when it was created.

But charter schools founded and run by outside organizations, as specified in the Founding Group Model, do not have the track record of making improvements for students.

According to the [Review of Separating Fact & Fiction](https://nepc.colorado.edu/thinktank/review-separating-fact-and-fiction), by Mary Miron, Western Michigan University, and William Mathis and Kevin Welner, University of Colorado, Boulder, February 2015, here are some of the findings about which Iowa’s urban districts are most concerned;

* Charter Schools are not public schools despite legislation stating that intent
* Charters Schools lack transparency on use of public funds
* Charters aren’t accountable to public since their boards aren’t elected
* Charters don’t enroll underserved populations, serve fewer English-language learners, and serve fewer students with disabilities
* Charters counsel out underperforming students and have higher suspension and expulsion rates
* Charter students do no better than public school students
* Underperforming charters are allowed to remain open
* Charters take funding away from public schools
* Charter schools re-segregate public education
* Charter schools aren’t the incubators of innovation they claim to be

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We urge you to not move Subsection 5 and subsequent subsections related to the Founding Group Model forward.

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