**UEN CALL TO ACTION**

**Charter Schools on House Calendar**

**March 5, 2021**

**The House’s Charter School Bill, HSB 242 awaiting a new bill number, was approved by the House Education Committee March 3 on party lines, placing it on the House Debate Calendar.**

The bill contains two kinds of charter schools: 1) chartered by the local school board and approved by the state board of education and 2) chartered by an outside entity known as a founding group model and approved by the state board. Details of the bill regarding the “founding group model.”

* Establishes a Founding Group-state board model (new attendance center, not authorized by the school district). This provision includes the same requirements for application but no vote of parents or teachers is required.
* Provides for a Charter school contract; requires DE to enter into a contract with approved charter school within 30 days, allows the initial contract for ten school budget years, allows delay of start up by one year, with the ability to request an extension if need more time.
* The bill defines “founding group” as a person, group of persons, or education service provider that develops and submits an application for a charter school to the state board.
* Possible chartering founding groups:university or college, private corporation related to the community, disgruntled parent group over a boundary or school closure, nonprofit, education management organization (EMO), former teachers or administrator, former school board members, community college, city or county, maybe even the state.
* Governance:the bill defines the “Governing Board” to mean the independent board of a charter school whose members are elected or selected pursuant to the charter school contract.

UEN opposes Charter Schools charters by an outside entity:

* **Urban School Flexibility:** School boards should be in charge of any charter schools in their communities. Provisions of HSB 242 expanding flexibility for Public Charter schools are only good if those flexibilities, oversight and authority to charter remain with the locally elected school board. We should expand Iowa’s existing charter school law to give that flexibility to school boards. The second chartering method, to allow outside entities to create charter schools without the school board’s authority or consent, is not good for Iowa.
* **Public Oversight:** taxpayer dollars should be overseen by locally elected public officials like school boards. We don’t need an “education management organization” with no Iowa connections telling Iowans what’s best for our students.
* We already have a public school charter law in Iowa.
* Districts are already providing innovative, personalized instructional opportunities to help our students be successful in the 21st century and beyond.
* Share what your district does that helps your students prepare for the future such as:
	+ Innovative program offerings
	+ Personalized instruction opportunities
	+ Concurrent enrollment opportunities
	+ Career or technical academies
	+ Collaborations with local businesses or apprenticeship programs

In addition to the talking points in the [UEN testimony](https://www.uen-ia.org/uen-statement-hsb-242-subcommittee-charter-schools) shared with the Subcommittee, here’s another resource. ISFIS summarized a report, [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. Find the [ISFIS Summary for additional thoughts to share](https://www.iowaschoolfinance.com/system/files/members/Public/ISFIS%20-%20NEPC%20Review%20of%20NAPCS%20Report%20Summary%20-%20Feb%202021.docx).

**House Members**

To call and leave a message at the statehouse during Session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221. You can ask if they are available, leave a message for them to call you back, or leave a short message to “oppose any school voucher proposal.” Legislators are typically back home over the weekend.

The following links will take you to each Representative’s legislative page, with email address and often home or cell phone number so you can easily connect with them. Continue to contact House members, especially House Republicans, asking for a NO vote on the Founding Group Charter Model. Let us know what responses you get back. Remember to be respectful and explain the impact these provisions would have on your school and education for your students.

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