

CALL TO ACTION

Charter School Omnibus Bill, HF 2713, on the House Calendar April 2, 2026

House Action: The House Appropriations Committee amended and approved the House's Charter School Omnibus Bill, HF 2713, which provides funding and support for charter school expansion and private preschools that would negatively impact public school districts. [HF 2713](#) was approved by the House Appropriations Committee, April 1, moving it to the House Calendar. This bill goes much further than the Governor's Charter School Bill, HF 2699, which is still in the House Appropriations Committee.

General Charter School Background: Charter schools were created based on the theory that they could operate more efficiently if they were spared significant regulation. Nationally, many charters fail to attract enough students, with as many as 25% closing in their first five years (Source: [2024 Report by the National Center for Charter School Accountability](#), examining charter school closures from 1998 to 2022). After 20 years, the rate reaches 55%. More than 1 million students were attending a charter school when it closed, the report stated, citing data from more than 2 million U.S. DOE records. "Many closures — four in 10 — occurred without sufficient warning, with schools closing mid-year or abruptly before the new school year began," wrote the report's author, research analyst Ryan Pflieger. "We found commonalities in the reasons why charter schools close. One reason was repeatedly cited: the school failed to attract and retain enough students. Insufficient enrollment was the most frequently given reason charter schools closed, accounting for 47 percent of all closures."

Iowa has only recently seen a major expansion of charter schools, with 19 authorized by the State Board of Education in the last few years and 10 already operating. Iowa policymakers would do well to learn from the experience in other states.

Charter schools are popping up in school districts already experiencing declining enrollment and challenging demographics (higher poverty, concentrated English-learners, and a higher number of students with disabilities). But if Iowa follows national patterns, there will be charters in rural areas that will further stress smaller, declining enrollment school districts and communities.

Advocacy Action on HF 2713: Contact Your Representatives ASAP and ask for a NO VOTE on HF 2713 if it becomes scheduled for floor debate. **Target your outreach ASAP to Representatives (as the bill is on the House Calendar).** You may also include Senators, but their version, SF 2425, is still in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The following chart shows provision of HF 2713 to include in your messages, UEN's position, and talking points:

Bill Provision & UEN Position	Talking Points
<p>TSS: Requires the state TSS cost per pupil to follow students to charter schools. An appropriation pays for the first year of TSS for the charter students. In the second and subsequent years, DOM intercepts the TSS State Aid and pays it to the charter school. UEN opposes this provision.</p>	<p>The district TSS per pupil was calculated based on the cost of paying teachers the new salary minimums. The range in TSS per pupil, from \$700 to over \$3,000, proves that TSS is not based on student count. Charters are not required to limit TSS funding to teacher pay, or to pay teachers the state salary minimums. UEN suggested the state appropriate funds to pay for TSS, rather than taking funds away from public school districts.</p>
<p>Sports/Extracurricular Activities: Requires school districts to allow charter school students to participate in sports and extracurricular activities at public schools. UEN opposes this provision if charters do not have to pay public districts for these activities.</p>	<p>Public school districts pay for coaches, uniforms, equipment, facilities, referees and transportation, typically out of per pupil costs or student activity fees (both in short supply). UEN would not oppose this provision if the charter school had to pay for the public district's costs of providing these activities to students.</p>
<p>LEAs: Deems charter school boards as local education agencies for purposes of receiving federal funds. UEN is opposed.</p>	<p>UEN is concerned that federal funds, such as Title funds and others, will be diverted to charter schools, even though public school districts where charters are located are already receiving less federal funding.</p>
<p>Buildings: Requires the Iowa Finance Authority to work with charter schools on financing, building, and repairing school buildings. Creates a revolving fund. UEN opposes this provision.</p>	<p>With national experience showing 25% of charters close within 5 years, the state of Iowa should be very cautious about state support for infrastructure financing. Who will be on the hook for a 20-year bond if a charter closes in 5 years?</p>
<p>Preschool: Authorizes community-based providers to participate in SVPP PK and requires school districts to enter into a 28E agreement with a community-based partner upon request. Provides state aid for the private program. Prohibits school districts and the state from providing oversight or requiring a community partner to modify enrollment provisions or instructional standards in order to receive the funds. UEN opposes.</p>	<p>Without oversight, private PKs will not need to employ licensed teachers, meet quality PK program standards, or even provide a minimum number of instructional hours. We believe this provision was intended to prevent state or LEA oversight of the religious program that private PK's might deliver. If that's the case, amend the bill to specify that the State and political subdivisions are prohibited from requiring a community partner to modify <u>religious</u> standards in order to receive the funds</p>
<p>ESA: Allows a student to apply for an ESA from Dec. 1-20 preceding in order to attend in the second semester. Makes the ESA payment 50% for the start of the second semester. UEN opposes this provision.</p>	<p>Since SF 2201, SSA included a second enrollment count on January 15, 2027, to impact the budget beginning July 1, 2027, there is no longer a one-year protection against lower enrollment due to ESAs.</p>

Advocacy Actions:

Contact your Representatives today. Charter schools are moving too fast in Iowa, with 17 already authorized. Iowa should learn from the rest of the nation regarding the impact charter schools have on the public schools from which enrolled students come.

Specifically ask your Representatives to oppose these provisions:

- TSS should stay with the public school districts. If charters need this funding, the state should appropriate it. If Charters get this funding, they should be subject to the same regulations as public schools, using it only for teacher pay and being mandated to pay the state's minimum salary.
- If public schools must provide services to charter schools, charter schools should be required to pay for those services.
- If charter schools are defined as LEAs, which federal funds will go to charter schools?
- Be careful about obligating IFA and the State to a revolving loan fund, given the national statistics on charter school closures (25% close within 5 years).
- Private PK providers should abide by the same quality standards as public PK programs. Amend the language to prohibit state or school district oversight of "religious" standards, but ensure oversight of the educational program, so the 4-year-olds in private programs are set up for success.
- Remove the second-semester application deadline in December. Instead, the ESA application deadline should mirror public school open enrollment deadlines, due March 1 of the prior school year.

Find your Representatives here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/house>. Better yet, reach out to them at home this weekend. If you haven't heard from them by Monday at 1:00, call and leave a message at the House Switchboard for your Representative (515) 281-3221. Send a specific email to your Representative with your request. Please let us know if you receive any commitments of support back from your local legislators.

Thank you for your advocacy on behalf of the students and families in your school district!