The General Assembly Should Keep the State Charter School Commission

HB3754

Just 2 1/2 years old, the State Charter School Commission has been doing exactly what the General Assembly asked it to do and has been doing it well.

The Commission was established with near-unanimous support in 2011 by votes of 102-6 in the House and 52-0 in the Senate.

Among other duties, the Commission receives and considers appeals from groups that have applied to start a charter school but been turned down by their local school board. This appeal function is not new and it is important. Appeals have always existed in Illinois’ charter school law. From 1996 to 2011, ISBE handled these appeals. If Illinois had no appeal process, applicants would be forced to file lawsuits in court, a much more expensive process.

The Commission has been a strong voice for quality and accountability for charter schools. The Commission created academic and financial criteria for state-authorized charter schools - criteria that did not previously exist during the first 15 years of the state’s charter school law.

In 2 1/2 years, the Commission has received 38 appeals and approved only two of them.

The Commission conducts all of its work publicly and transparently, in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act.

Legislation has been introduced (HB3754) to eliminate the Commission and return the appeal power to ISBE. This legislation is opposed by the Commission, ISBE, Advance Illinois, the Illinois Network of Charter Schools and others. The Tribune and Sun-Times also opposed the legislation and called for the continued operation of the Commission.

Just 2 1/2 years old, the State Charter School Commission has been doing exactly what the General Assembly asked it to do and has been doing it well. We ask for a no vote on HB3754 and for your continued support.