



PA Senate Education Public Hearing

October 20, 2021

Testimony of Jane Swan, CEO Reach Cyber Charter School

Good morning Chairman Martin, Chairwoman Williams and Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Jane Swan and I am the CEO for Reach Cyber Charter School. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the proposed regulation impacting charter schools and cyber charter schools. Pennsylvania parents elected the 253 members of the General Assembly they trust and need them to work through the legislative process when it involves the educational rights of their children.

The proposed regulation punishes charter schools! Governor Wolf should rescind this proposed regulation and work within the legislative process and with the General Assembly! Representative Jesse Topper's has introduced House Bill 1685, a reform bill, that seeks to address issues, including the authorization process and ethics reform.

During the pandemic, over 5,800 additional students joined Reach, ending the 2020-2021 school year with 8,644 students. Many other charter schools across the state saw similar growth. Parents continue to choose charter schools, growing by nearly 23,000 or 15.49%. We continue to serve over 7,200 students at Reach to this day. Our doors are always open and we welcome new learners every day! Although some families choose to return to their local public school, many chose to stay at Reach for the individual attention, STEM opportunities, gifted education, career pathways and flexible learning!

Last year, Reach Cyber Charter School's graduation rate increased to 83% or 618 students, an increase of nearly 10% and 200 students compared to the previous year. Internal English Language Arts growth measures indicated a 20% growth and math, 10% growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Additionally, PSSA and Keystone scores, although for a smaller population who would have tested during ordinary times. Indicated 10% to 40% growth in math and English language arts.

Every family deserves the freedom to choose where and how their children are educated. This proposed regulation is inequitable. There is an incorrect assumption that charters don't use funds wisely yet, we conduct yearly audits and must follow all of the same right to know laws of public school districts. We even report this and more through the Annual Charter School Report. Additionally, the regulations assume charters lack attention to equity when charter enroll higher percentages of low-income, Black, Hispanic and students in special education than school districts. Our charters provide technology and ways to access technology through multiple means such as quarterly

technology payments and hot spots. It is disappointing that this proposed regulation assumes no guarantee of innovation or excellence yet charters were innovators during the pandemic, as families chose to go to established cyber schools for consistency.

Reform is needed around the authorization process. As mentioned earlier, Representative Topper's HB 1685 addresses these issues. We believe that any discussion about cyber charter school funding should occur as part of a holistic analysis of public education funding. I urge the Governor to rescind this proposed regulation and to work with the legislature and the charter school community.

Thank you for your time and care for the parents and children of Pennsylvania!