



Accountability for All

We believe Michigan's kids deserve better.

Unlike traditional public school teachers or individual public schools – both of which are being held accountable for their performance more than ever before in Michigan – charter authorizers are **getting a free pass**.

Michigan's charter sector controls nearly **\$1 billion in taxpayer dollars each year** and is responsible for more than **140,000 students** – yet the charter authorizers who open these schools are arguably accountable to no one.



Our public education system is failing our students.

Michigan ranks **42nd** in the nation in 4th grade math and is one of only six states that has posted an overall loss in student performance in 4th grade reading since 2003.

Charter school quality affects our state's most vulnerable students. About **72%** of Michigan's charter school students qualify for a free or reduced price lunch – an **indicator of poverty**. More than **60%** are African American or Latino.

Charter school authorizers are getting a free pass.

Michigan's charter authorizers possess the sole responsibility for approving new charter schools and monitoring charters they have approved. They are arguably accountable to no one. Not even the state's governor has the power to close low-performing authorizers.

About 20% of the nearly 150 charter schools that opened between Fall 2011 and 2014 are authorized by **"D" or F" authorizers on our 2015 Charter Authorizer Report scorecard**. In many of the schools run by "D" or "F" authorizers, students are getting a much worse education than they would even in the state's **lowest-performing public school districts**, such as Detroit and Flint Public Schools.

Charter school authorizers have no incentive to be selective when approving charter operators. Authorizers receive 3% of the public funding for each school they authorize, regardless of performance. That's \$30 million that went into authorizers' pockets last year.

Some charter authorizers are doing great work.

Six authorizers, including Washtenaw Intermediate School District, Grand Rapids Public Schools, and Hillsdale ISD, received an **“A” on our scorecard.**

In the last three years, these authorizers have made good authorizing decisions **at least 90% of the time.**

But all authorizers need to hold charter schools accountable for their performance.

Some charter school operators are engaging in “authorizer shopping.” This means a low-performing charter operator shops around to find an authorizer with low performance standards that will approve its schools to open or expand. This practice is one reason why the National Association of Charter School Authorizers warns against having too many authorizers with too little regulation – a problem that Michigan now has.

We can do a better job for Michigan’s students.

States with strong charter sectors – including Massachusetts – hold charter schools accountable to students and have measures in place to ensure their success. If Michigan follows their lead, we can achieve the same results for our students.



Accountability for charter authorizing decisions.

Authorizers that consistently do not make good authorizing decisions should be subject to formal sanctions, including warnings, suspensions, and – for failing authorizers – possible dissolution.



Accountability for operator performance.

Authorizers should not be allowed to approve new contracts or expansion for consistently low-performing charter operators. Michigan students need a performance guarantee and standard, to fulfill charters’ promise to our state’s families and taxpayers.



Transparent, limited charter contracts.

New charter contracts should only be issued for three years or fewer. Michigan must also require consistent reporting among charter school boards and operators regarding profit margins and how public dollars are spent in charter schools, to assure Michiganders that their tax dollars are being spent appropriately.