



TESTIMONY

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HOUSE BILL 2247 AND CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

By Susan Pendergrass

Testimony before the Missouri House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Susan Pendergrass, Ph.D, and I am Director of Education Policy for the Show-Me Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, Missouri-based think tank that advances sensible, well-researched, free-market solutions to state and local policy issues. The ideas presented here are my own. This testimony is intended to address proposals before this committee that will affect charter schools in Missouri.

There are currently nearly 3.2 million charter school students¹ attending over 7,000 public charter schools in the United States, and demand for them continues to grow. Since 2005, total charter school enrollment has tripled, with 42 states plus the District of Columbia making charter

schools available to parents.² And charter schools are not just an urban trend. In the 2015–16 school year, 56 percent of charter schools were in urban areas, 26 percent were in suburban areas, and nearly 20 percent were in small towns and rural communities.³ This means there are over 1,000 charter schools available to parents in small communities.

Support for charter schools is consistently high in surveys of both parents⁴ and voters,⁵ particularly when given a definition. In fact, in a nationally representative survey of parents of school-aged children, 75 percent of parents who do not have access to a charter school would favor having one open in their community or neighborhood.⁶ Most national polls^{7–9} find that about one in six parents list a charter school as their number one education choice for their child.

ADVANCING LIBERTY WITH RESPONSIBILITY
BY PROMOTING MARKET SOLUTIONS
FOR MISSOURI PUBLIC POLICY

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOL PERFORMANCE?

The original promise of charter schools was that they would be given substantial autonomy in exchange for meeting performance targets. Initial research¹⁰ on charter schools was generally characterized as “mixed” due to a lack of robust data and the challenge of comparing these unique public schools to their non-charter public school counterparts. However, more recent research has peeled back the onion quite a bit to reveal where and how charter schools are outperforming expectations. A 2011 meta-analysis, restricted to only the highest-quality research, found that in 15 of 16 studies charter schools had a positive impact on student academic achievement.¹¹ The positive effects tended to be stronger for math and at the elementary school level.

A series of studies conducted by the Stanford Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) has broken new ground. These studies rely on creating “virtual twins” for each charter school student. The virtual twins are composites of multiple students who attend non-charter public schools and who are matched to their charter school counterpart on demographics, socioeconomic status, and prior performance. A 2013 CREDO study¹² found that, across sixteen states, charter schools had a significant impact on reading, but not in math. However, in that same study, Missouri charter school students were found to have a statistically significant improvement in learning gains over their non-charter school twins. In fact, Missouri charter school students gained the equivalent of an additional 14 days of learning in reading each year and 22 days of learning in math each year. (If you assume that a student gains 180 days of learning in a 180 day school year, then charter school students in Missouri gained 194 days of learning in reading and 202 days of learning in math in a single year.)

A 2015 CREDO study of urban charter schools found that urban¹³ charter school students gain the equivalent of roughly 40 days of additional learning per year in math and 28 days in reading, as compared to the amount of learning gained by their matched twins in non-charter public schools. The findings were even stronger for low-income students and students of color.

An analysis of charter school enrollment data conducted by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools found that, in both Kansas City and St. Louis, charter school students were more likely to score Proficient or above on state assessments than non-charter public school students.¹⁴ This analysis compared the share of total enrollment in charter schools in those districts to the share of students who scored Proficient or above and, in both cases, the share of Proficient seats in charter schools was higher than the share of total seats.

DO WE NEED MORE CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MISSOURI?

Currently in Missouri, charter schools can technically be opened anywhere. In unaccredited districts, meaning Kansas City and St. Louis City, those who are interested in putting their ideas and energy into practice in exchange for autonomy and accountability can submit a charter school application to a number of approved sponsors, including a state charter school board and an array of higher education institutions. However, in accredited districts, of which there are 516 out of 518 total districts, the only option for opening a charter school is to ask the local school board to approve a charter application. So far, that option has proven to be, not surprisingly, a road block. Is this due to a lack of demand?

In a 2014 survey of registered voters in Missouri, nearly 60 percent responded that the public schools in Missouri are “fair” or “poor,” including 55 percent of respondents who were also school parents.¹⁵ In that same survey, 15 percent of school parents indicated that, if they could select any type of school, including private schools, in order to obtain the best education for their child, they would choose a charter school. In other words, charter schools were the first choice for over 100,000 students in Missouri. However, only about 22,700 public school students in Missouri are attending a charter school this year due to limited access.¹⁶

HOW WOULD THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION IMPACT CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION IN MISSOURI?

The proposed legislation would allow those interested in opening a charter school to pursue sponsors other than

their local school board in any district in which there is a school that has attained less than 60 percent of its possible Annual Performance Report (APR) points for at least two of the prior three years. The charter schools that apply for a sponsor under these guidelines are restricted to opening a school with the same grade levels as the poorly performing school.

According to data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in 2017 approximately 60 schools in 27 school districts met those criteria. (See Table 1). These 60 schools enrolled nearly 27,000 students in 2017, and those students scored a combined 41.5 percent Proficient or above in English/language arts (ELA) and 21.8 percent Proficient or above in math in 2017. In other words, nearly six in ten students were not Proficient in ELA and eight in ten were not Proficient in math.

It seems highly unlikely that the parents of all 27,000 students were happy with their child's public school. The proposed legislation would give parents in this situation an exit strategy from their low-performing schools, but the proposed legislation ignores the needs of parents in other schools and districts who want additional educational options for their children. Most other states with charter schools do not limit them to punitive circumstances. Charter schools, in fact, can be transformative for parents and students in all types of communities. Why create unneeded barriers to opportunity?

Consider a community to our south—Helena, Arkansas, a small town of fewer than 10,000 residents. In 2002, the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) opened a small (65 students) middle school in Helena—the KIPP Delta College Preparatory School—with 90 percent of their enrollment qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Since then, KIPP has opened two more schools in Helena, as well as schools in nearby Blytheville and Forest City. In 2017, 31 percent of KIPP Delta students met the ACT College Readiness score in math, compared to 17 percent in Helena, 21 percent in Blytheville, and 21 percent in Forest City. In reading, 62 percent met the College Readiness score, compared to 51 percent or less in the neighboring towns. Of the 273 KIPP Delta alumni in 2017, 95 percent had graduated from high school, 81 percent had started college, and 47 percent had completed

a 4-year degree – higher than the U.S. average of 34 percent or, tragically, the U.S. average of just nine percent for low-income students.¹⁷

Beyond the limitations on where charter schools can open, the proposed legislation would place limits on who can serve on charter school boards and proscriptive language on curriculum selection. While expanding charter schools beyond two districts in Missouri would be a step forward, autonomy and flexibility are hallmarks of these innovative public schools and preserving that autonomy is paramount to their success.

We know that we have good and bad schools across the state. We know that most parents believe they should be able to choose their child's public school, regardless of their address. We know that successful solutions are happening elsewhere. We have hardworking and innovative teachers, school leaders, parents, and community partners throughout Missouri that might have even better solutions. Shouldn't they should have the freedom to improve education statewide?

*Susan Pendergrass is the Director of Education Policy
at the Show-Me Institute*

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Table 1: Schools and Districts Meeting the Qualifications of HB 2247 for Seeking Alternate Charter School Sponsors

DISTRICT NAME	SCHOOL NAME	BEG GRADE	END GRADE	2017 ENROLLMENT	2017 ELA % PROF
CAPE GIRARDEAU 63	CENTRAL JR. HIGH	07	08	611	53.9%
CARTHAGE R-IX	CARTHAGE MIDDLE SCHOOL	05	06	675	43.5%
CASSVILLE R-IV	CASSVILLE MIDDLE	06	08	420	58.0%
COLUMBIA 93	BLUE RIDGE ELEM.	PK	05	413	25.9%
COLUMBIA 93	JOHN B. LANGE MIDDLE	06	08	623	39.7%
COLUMBIA 93	THOMAS BENTON ELEM.	PK	05	314	37.3%
COLUMBIA 93	ALPHA HART LEWIS	PK	05	434	36.4%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	AIRPORT ELEM.	K	06	225	33.3%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	WALNUT GROVE ELEM.	K	06	461	36.4%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	BERKELEY MIDDLE	06	08	145	33.9%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	BERMUDA ELEM.	K	06	228	30.0%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	JOHNSON WABASH ELEM.	K	06	406	31.4%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	FERGUSON MIDDLE	07	08	518	34.1%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	CROSS KEYS MIDDLE	07	08	747	42.7%
FERGUSON-FLORISSANT R-II	GRIFFITH ELEM.	K	06	340	34.9%
HANNIBAL 60	HANNIBAL MIDDLE	06	08	775	54.6%
HAYTI R-II	WALLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL	05	08	181	39.4%
HAZELWOOD	GRANNEMANN ELEM.	K	05	411	41.6%
HAZELWOOD	SOUTHEAST MIDDLE	06	08	605	34.8%
HICKMAN MILLS C-1	SYMINGTON ELEM.	01	06	353	21.0%
HICKMAN MILLS C-1	DOBBS ELEM.	01	06	402	35.0%
HICKMAN MILLS C-1	SMITH-HALE MIDDLE	07	08	755	28.1%
INDEPENDENCE 30	ABRAHAM MALLINSON ELEM.	02	05	379	44.8%
INDEPENDENCE 30	KORTE ELEM.	PK	05	561	55.1%
JEFFERSON CITY	THOMAS JEFFERSON MIDDLE	06	08	1,028	60.8%
JEFFERSON CITY	THORPE J. GORDON ELEM.	K	05	292	55.8%
KENNETT 39	KENNETT MIDDLE	06	08	426	59.6%
NEW MADRID CO. R-I	LILBOURN ELEM.	PK	05	259	41.3%
NEW MADRID CO. R-I	CENTRAL MIDDLE	06	08	310	41.9%
NEW MADRID CO. R-I	NEW MADRID ELEM.	PK	05	263	46.2%
NORMANDY SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE	7th and 8th Grade Center	07	08	415	28.9%
NORMANDY SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE	NORMANDY HIGH	09	12	554	33.1%*
NORMANDY SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE	LUCAS CROSSING ELEM. COMPLEX	01	06	822	25.7%
POPLAR BLUFF R-I	POPLAR BLUFF JR. HIGH	07	08	746	55.5%
PURDY R-II	PURDY MIDDLE	05	08	197	40.6%
RAYTOWN C-2	RAYTOWN MIDDLE	06	08	812	48.5%
RAYTOWN C-2	SOUTH MIDDLE	06	08	593	42.4%
RAYTOWN C-2	WESTRIDGE ELEM.	K	05	415	40.9%
RITENOUR	HOECH MIDDLE	06	08	689	46.8%
RITENOUR	RITENOUR MIDDLE	06	08	614	42.1%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	DANFORTH ELEM.	K	05	290	29.4%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	HIGHLAND ELEM.	K	05	325	26.1%

2017 Math % PROF	LATEST YEAR SCHOOL SCORED BELOW 60% OF POSSIBLE POINTS	TOTAL POINTS EARNED	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	PCT POINTS EARNED
24.0%	2016	33.0	70.0	47.1%
29.2%	2016	32.0	70.0	45.7%
37.3%	2017	41.5	70.0	59.3%
16.6%	2017	33.5	70.0	47.9%
22.0%	2017	34.0	70.0	48.6%
17.8%	2016	36.0	70.0	51.4%
24.2%	2017	39.5	70.0	56.4%
16.7%	2016	14.0	70.0	20.0%
18.6%	2016	16.0	70.0	22.9%
11.3%	2017	30.0	70.0	42.9%
18.2%	2016	29.5	70.0	42.1%
11.6%	2017	32.0	70.0	45.7%
9.4%	2016	39.0	70.0	55.7%
18.6%	2017	41.0	70.0	58.6%
15.1%	2017	41.5	70.0	59.3%
45.7%	2017	41.5	70.0	59.3%
17.4%	2017	40.0	70.0	57.1%
17.4%	2017	33.5	70.0	47.9%
11.1%	2017	35.0	70.0	50.0%
7.7%	2017	35.0	70.0	50.0%
29.4%	2017	40.0	70.0	57.1%
21.1%*	2016	29.0	50.0	58.0%
32.5%	2016	24.5	70.0	35.0%
40.1%	2016	35.0	70.0	50.0%
40.4%	2016	38.5	70.0	55.0%
34.4%	2016	39.5	70.0	56.4%
35.8%	2016	32.0	70.0	45.7%
20.7%	2017	37.5	70.0	53.6%
15.5%	2016	38.0	70.0	54.3%
23.5%	2017	39.0	70.0	55.7%
8.5%	2017	37.5	70.0	53.6%
5.3%*	2016	80.5	140.0	57.5%
15.1%	2017	40.5	70.0	57.9%
25.9%	2016	37.0	70.0	52.9%
19.3%	2016	37.5	70.0	53.6%
15.2%	2017	39.0	70.0	55.7%
16.7%	2017	40.0	70.0	57.1%
19.7%	2017	41.5	70.0	59.3%
24.8%	2016	32.5	70.0	46.4%
26.7%*	2016	38.5	70.0	55.0%
7.1%	2016	29.0	70.0	41.4%
10.5%	2017	30.5	70.0	43.6%

Table 1: Schools and Districts Meeting the Qualifications of HB 2247 for Seeking Alternate Charter School Sponsors, *cont'd.*

DISTRICT NAME	SCHOOL NAME	BEG GRADE	END GRADE	2017 ENROLLMENT	2017 ELA % PROF
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	MOLINE ELEM.	K	05	330	40.3%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	GLASGOW ELEM.	K	05	328	17.1%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	LEMASTERS ELEM.	K	05	330	41.4%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	GIBSON ELEM.	K	05	431	30.6%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	LEWIS AND CLARK ELEM.	K	05	176	45.3%
RIVERVIEW GARDENS	R. G. CENTRAL MIDDLE	06	08	642	26.2%
SENATH-HORNERSVILLE C-8	SENATH-HORNERSVILLE MIDDLE	05	08	223	54.0%
SIKESTON R-6	5TH AND 6TH GRADE CTR.	05	06	516	45.1%
SLATER	ALEXANDER ELEM.	PK	08	215	43.4%
SOUTHLAND C-9	SOUTHLAND ELEM.	K	06	141	48.5%
SPRINGFIELD R-XII	HICKORY HILLS MIDDLE	06	08	482	51.1%
SPRINGFIELD R-XII	WESTPORT ELEM.	K	05	444	44.9%
SPRINGFIELD R-XII	WESTPORT MIDDLE SCHOOL	06	08	445	38.2%
SPRINGFIELD R-XII	JARRETT MIDDLE	06	08	471	51.2%
SPRINGFIELD R-XII	BOWERMAN ELEM.	K	05	295	46.0%
ST. JOSEPH	ROBIDOUX MIDDLE	07	08	374	46.7%
UNIVERSITY CITY	BRITTANY WOODS	06	08	590	37.8%
WINFIELD R-IV	WINFIELD MIDDLE	06	08	334	45.7%
				26,799	41.5%

NOTE: Excludes the districts of Kansas City and St. Louis, charter schools, and alternative schools.

SOURCE: Missouri Comprehensive Data Collection, QUICK FACTS, Building Attendance Data, accessed 1/30/2018. <https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/quickfacts/Pages/Student-Characteristics.aspx> and MSIP5 Summary Report, School-Public, accessed 1.28/2018, [https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/guidedinquiry/MSIP5%20Annual%20Performance%20Report%20APR/MSIP5%20Annual%20Performance%20Report%20\(APR\).aspx?ID=__bk8100030013006300030093006300](https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/guidedinquiry/MSIP5%20Annual%20Performance%20Report%20APR/MSIP5%20Annual%20Performance%20Report%20(APR).aspx?ID=__bk8100030013006300030093006300), and Missouri 2017 APR Summary by Buildings, accessed 1/29/2018, [https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/Pages/A-Z%20Index.aspx?start=.](https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/Pages/A-Z%20Index.aspx?start=)

2017 Math % PROF	LATEST YEAR SCHOOL SCORED BELOW 60% OF POSSIBLE POINTS	TOTAL POINTS EARNED	TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	PCT POINTS EARNED
30.3%	2016	29.0	70.0	41.4%
9.3%	2017	36.0	70.0	51.4%
28.6%	2016	37.0	70.0	52.9%
15.1%	2017	38.0	70.0	54.3%
31.3%	2016	37.5	70.0	53.6%
6.6%	2017	40.0	70.0	57.1%
18.8%	2016	37.5	70.0	53.6%
29.5%	2017	39.0	70.0	55.7%
17.6%	2016	38.0	70.0	54.3%
10.3%	2017	38.0	70.0	54.3%
27.3%	2017	36.0	70.0	51.4%
26.5%	2017	38.0	70.0	54.3%
11.9%	2017	38.0	70.0	54.3%
21.3%	2017	39.0	70.0	55.7%
34.3%	2017	40.0	70.0	57.1%
20.9%	2017	38.5	70.0	55.0%
18.5%	2017	33.0	70.0	47.1%
16.3%	2017	38.5	70.0	55.0%
21.8%				

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