

Resolution for Support of Charter Schools in Washington State

Whereas, the platform of the National Democratic Party supports public charter schools; and

Whereas, the highest ranking elected Democrat in the land, President Barack Obama, supports public charter schools; and

Whereas, “the National Education Association (NEA) believes that charter schools and other non traditional public school options have the potential to facilitate education reforms and develop new and creative teaching methods that can be replicated in traditional public schools for the benefit of all children. Whether charter schools will fulfill this potential depends on how charter schools are designed and implemented, including oversight and assistance provided by charter authorizers”; and

Whereas, the largest teachers union in the country, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), also supports public charter schools; and

Whereas, public charter schools are now a mainstream option in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico; and

Whereas, more than 20 urban school districts around the country now partner with public charter schools to create system-wide improvements; and

Whereas, public charter schools are serving a more diverse group of students than traditional public schools; and

Whereas, high quality public charter schools are successfully closing achievement gaps; and

Whereas, parents want public charter schools, as evidenced by waiting

lists that include 420,000 students; and

Whereas, high quality public charter schools give underserved parents a choice and voice in their children's education; and

Whereas, high quality public charter schools can act as laboratories of reform, identifying successful practices that can be replicated by traditional public schools; and

Whereas, high quality public charter schools offer teachers autonomy not typically found in traditional public schools; and

Whereas, Washington State ranks 37th in the nation in high school graduation rates; and

Whereas, Washington State has entrenched income and racial achievement gaps; and

Whereas, if Washington State continues on its current path, it will take 105 years to close the achievement gap; and

Whereas, low income and minority parents should have access to great schools for their children; and

Whereas, only 11% of African American and Hispanic students in South Seattle and South King County schools are on track to get a certificate with labor market value, or a career credential, or a college degree; and

Whereas, KIPP, one of several high performing public charter school networks, serves 32,000 students (85% are from low income families, 95% are African American or Hispanic), 95% of whom have graduated from high school; and

Whereas, a high quality public education system is the cornerstone of a

prosperous, free and just society; and

Whereas, children trapped in low performing schools are particularly vulnerable; and

Whereas, fighting for the most vulnerable is supposed to be what the Democratic Party stands for; and

Whereas, the Washington State Democrats and King County Democrat's defense of an educational status quo that poorly serves low income and minority kids is not in the best interests of our children or their families; and

Whereas, Washington State Democrats intransigence on public charter schools will prove to be a political liability;

Therefore be it resolved, that we 34th District Democrats strongly advocate for the passage of a public charter school law in Washington State that provides opportunities for our educationally disadvantaged students.

Be it further resolved that Washington State's public charter school law takes advantage of 20 years of lessons learned in other states and focuses on strong accountability for authorizers and schools.

Be it finally resolved that we 34th District Democrats urge our legislators to work to support a public charter school law for Washington State that focuses on giving educationally disadvantaged students access to high quality public charter schools. Copies of this resolution shall be sent to our 34th District legislators, Governor Gregoire, and Superintendent of Public Education Randy Dorn.

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