

Fiscal Committee Questions Relative to FIS 19-301 (Tabled 11/08/19)

- 1) To ensure that public charter schools receive the same amount of aid that local voters approve for traditional public schools, could statute be amended to require that all public school students get the same adequacy grant amount from the State and the same local funding level regardless of the type of public school and how it was approved? Please explain the potential impacts of such a change.
- 2) If the Federal grant is accepted and enrollment increases at charter schools during the FY 2020-2021 biennium does the Department have sufficient appropriations in their current budget to fund these increases? If no, can the State limit growth of public charter school pupils during this biennium to ensure the current budget provides adequate funding?
- 3) Please provide a copy of the Department's Federal grant application, and a detailed description of the Department's plan and timeline for charter schools if this Federal grant is accepted.
- 4) When did the Department begin the application process for the Federal grant?
- 5) Did the Department receive input from charter schools, traditional public schools, or other sources during the development of the grant application? Can the Department please summarize this input?
- 6) How was the \$46M grant amount determined? Did the Department apply for this level of funding, or did the Federal Government determine this amount and how?
- 7) If the Department requests increased State public charter school funding for the FY 2022-2023 biennium, will they also present a written growth plan during the next budget cycle to explain the increased funding request?
- 8) During testimony we heard that traditional public schools had benefited from educational research related to existing public charter schools. Could the Department please provide written examples of how this has happened and in which school districts these benefits were realized?
- 9) What is the current status of the Charter School Legislative Oversight Committee and the status of the legally mandated annual report, which was last issued in 2011?
- 10) How does the Federal charter school grant and the potential increase in State charter school tuition overlap with the soon-to-be-launched School Funding Commission's upcoming work on the adequacy formula?
- 11) What are the implications of increasing the number of public schools in the State when student enrollment has continued to trend downward over the last ten years?
- 12) What is the impact on the Department's budget and plans for the current Fiscal Year if this Federal grant is accepted. The Committee will request a follow-up to this response at the end of the Fiscal Year.

- 13) What are the required written deliverables for Federal grant expenditures for the current and future years, and how will these be measured? What are the ramifications or penalties if these deliverables are not met?
- 14) Has the Department made any funding commitments to public charter schools or traditional public schools from this grant?
- 15) Can any of these funds be used for the purchase of buildings?
- 16) Subgrantees can use the Federal grant funds for hiring and compensating during "eligible planning periods". What constitutes an eligible planning period?
- 17) What would be the impact of delaying the acceptance of the Federal grant, or accepting the grant proceeds incrementally a year at a time?
- 18) What long-term financial obligations would this Federal grant create for both the State and public charter schools?
- 19) Since the Federal grant is one-time, does this create long-term consequences should one of the newly created public charter schools close? What safeguards would the Department use to avoid this scenario?
- 20) What is the current capacity of public charter schools? How many students applied and were accepted, and how many are on waiting lists?
- 21) Are there any geographic limits/guidelines for new public charter schools?
- 22) If the number of public charter school's doubled, what would be the impact on existing charter schools? Could some existing schools potentially close?
- 23) If the Federal grant is accepted what would be the unanticipated costs to school districts and municipalities?
- 24) Why is there a discrepancy between the student population figures (Special Education, Free and Reduced Lunch, English Language Learner, other student data) included on the Department's grant application, and other publicly available data?
- 25) What are the components of current State public charter school funding? Please breakdown the \$43 million appropriation for FY 2020: adequacy aid, charter school differential, building aid, etc.
- 26) Is there a financial incentive for a public charter school to be chartered by a local school district?
- 27) Are chartered public schools being paid for contracted enrollment or actual students enrolled?
- 28) What are the criteria for determining the current chartered public schools to be replicated and the schools to be expanded?
- 29) What are the criteria for obtaining approval for a new public charter school? Are the criteria for new chartered public schools different if authorized by the Board of Education or a school district?

- 30) Are current public charter schools required to employ Board of Education licensed or certified teachers?
- 31) Please provide the Committee with a projection of the Department's vision for the proposed growth of charter schools across the State ("business plan"), including the following information:
- Locations for each replicated and expanded charter schools
 - Five-year enrollment projections (by year) for each existing, new, replicated and expanded charter schools
 - Sources of students (LEA, district, other charters, homeschool transition, move in) to meet enrollment projections for each existing, new, replicated and expanded charter schools
 - Proximity to community colleges for each existing, new, replicated and expanded charter schools, and if this will influence the decision for placement of the schools
 - Academic focus areas (if any, for example technology) for each existing, new, replicated and expanded charter schools
 - Proforma 5-year financial statements broken down to capital and operating costs attributable to start-up (that could use the requested grant funds), longer-term capital and operating costs outside of the grant, and all sources of revenue for each existing, new, replicated and expanded charter schools.
- 32) What part of the Federal grant budget will be attributable to the start-up grant of schools that are already in operation?
- 33) How have public charter schools' projected enrollment compared to actual enrollment for each school?
- 34) In the Department's press release sharing testing data, were any charter schools excluded and for what reasons?
- 35) How many charter schools do we need in a State with a student population of 165,000?
- 36) Should the Department's proposed change to the public education landscape come before the House and Senate Education Committees?
- 37) Could the Department please provide a comprehensive report on existing charter schools operating in containing at least the following information on each existing charter school:

Student Enrollment

- When a charter school is authorized, the founders identify their enrollment projections for the first five years. For each individual charter school, what was the first five-year projected enrollment AND the first five-year actual enrollment? That is, how many students did they expect to have in year 1? How many did they actually enroll in year 1? Year 2? Year 3? And so on.

- How many students disenrolled during the school year in each grade level over the past five years? That is, students who began the school year at the charter school, but then left the school before completing the school year.
- Of those students, how many transferred to their residential, neighborhood school? Moved to another charter school? Began homeschooling? Transferred to a private school? Relocated in- or out-of-state?
- Of those students, what percentage qualify for free-and-reduced price lunch? Special education services? Are classified as English Language Learners?
- Over the past five years, how many students enrolled after the beginning of the start of school?
- Of those students, how many transferred from their residential, neighborhood school? From another charter school? From homeschooling? From a private school? From relocating in- or out-of-state.
- How many students enter for the first time from a neighborhood public school? Homeschooling? Another charter school? Private school? What is the data for each of the past five years?
- Identify the number of students who live in the district in which the charter school is located. For students who do not live in district, list the towns/cities where they reside, and the number of students from each of those communities.
- Description of alternative instructional arrangements if applicable
- School calendar, including professional development
- Number of days/hours per academic year
- Class schedule
- Source of students (local district schools, homeschool, move-in)
- Grades or ages served
- Number of students by grade or age
- Number of students with IEPs, on FR lunch, receiving ELL services

School Funding and Finance

- Audited financial reports for last five years (or since start)
- Identify whether they own or lease the building where they are located, and the annual cost associated with their agreement for the past five years.
- Identify the amount charged to the neighborhood public schools for Special Education services for the past three years, and the number of students receiving Special Education services.

- Additionally, for each school, identify whether the charter school contracts with an outside agency, hires staff in-house, or has the district provide services directly - and/or a combination - for Special Education services.
- For each charter school, identify the amount fundraised for each of the past five years.
- For each year, how much of the fundraised money came from parents/family members of students enrolled? In-town/district donors? In-state donors? National foundations/donors?

Charter School Personnel

- Identify the proportion of teachers who have their teaching certification through New Hampshire.
- Additionally, identify how many teach subjects/courses outside of that teaching certification, and how many subjects/courses per year.
- Identify the rate of teacher attrition and retention over the past five years. Identify the rate of school leader attrition and retention over the past five years.
- Identify the number of teachers in their first year of teaching. Provide data for the past five years.
- Additionally, identify the number of teachers who previously worked in a residential, neighborhood school; the number who previously worked at another charter school; the number who previously worked at a private school.
- Number of teachers
- Number of support staff (paraprofessionals)
- Teacher evaluation plan

Administration and Board of Trustees

- Mission statement
- Administration organizational chart
- Frequency of board meetings and website with links to agendas and minutes
- Links to staff and student manuals, school policies, program of studies
- Provide a list of Board members, their roles related to the school (Parent, community member, fundraiser, etc.). How many at each school have previous charter school Board experience?
- What is the Board attrition over the past five years? What were the expressed reasons for attrition?

Statewide Assessment

- What is the number of students who took the statewide assessment in each of the charter schools for 4th, 8th, and 11th grades? What is the number of students in neighborhood schools who took the statewide assessment in each neighborhood public school for 4th, 8th, and 11th grades?
- In the Department of Education's press release sharing testing data, were any charter schools excluded for any reason (low number of students, for example)? If so, which schools?

Communities, Charter Leaders, and Superintendents

- Has there been interest in any current school districts to open a school-based charter school? If so, how many districts have expressed interest?
- How many current charter school leaders plan to expand their charter schools to enroll additional students through this grant funding?
- How many current charter school leaders plan to replicate their charter school model through this grant funding?
- How many nonprofits have directly expressed interest to the NH Department of Education to open charter schools through this grant?
- Where are these nonprofits located in the state?
- How many nonprofits from out-of-state have contacted the NH Department of Education to open charter schools in NH?
- Which specific communities around the state is the NH Department of Education planning to open/encourage to open charter schools

- 38) A statement in the grant abstract states "A reflection of the Granite State's innovative approach to public charter schools is the New Hampshire Career Academy. This proposed charter school will enable students to graduate after a "super senior" (extended 12th) year with a high school diploma, an Associate's degree, an industry recognized credential, and a job interview with a NH company." Currently this is limited to public charter school students. What is the Department's plan to make this available to all public-school students"?
- 39) The Career Academy provides for a "super senior" high school program with a 13th year of high school. Has this high school modification been reviewed by a Legislative policy committee?
- 40) The State's application states that the highest priority for awarding the grant's funding will be to charter schools that target the educational disadvantaged student population. How will this be reviewed and determined by the Department when the State Board has a criterion that is currently used by the State when approving new charter schools?
- 41) How many charter schools opened under the last Federal grant?

42) How many current public charter schools will receive funds from this Federal grant?

43) Why can't the Career Academy be open to all New Hampshire students as an option?

There would have to be a cap because of the expense, but it would be an effective way for many NH students to get a year of community college and be able to graduate from their local high school. They could take courses as part of the Career Academy and remain a student in their local district but also be counted (like VLACS) as a Charter enrollee? Overall, for parents, it would be a year of free community college. There could be many options provided.

44) Will each community college become a charter school, and would they count as 7 new charters?