



**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Chairwoman,
Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing on “The Power
of Charter Schools: Promoting Opportunity for America’s Students”**

All students, regardless of zip code, deserve access to a high-quality education. That means giving students the opportunity to thrive in the learning environment that best suits their unique educational needs.

Every student is different, and families should be empowered to choose whatever school best suits their child’s strengths, rather than being forced into a one-size-fits-all approach. For many, charter schools are the best option for their student to hone his or her individual abilities and build a successful life.

Though they are still relatively new on the scene, with the first having opened just over 25 years ago, charter schools have proven an immensely popular option. These institutions currently serve over three million students nationwide, while surveys show another five million students would enroll in a charter school if given the chance.

In an effort to meet this growing demand, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) maintained and improved the important charter school program. The new law included reforms not only to support the development of high-quality new schools, but also to allow for the expansion and replication of high-quality charter schools already found around the country. These reforms included requirements to help these schools improve recruitment and retention of students, as well as to support better authorizing practices, and reforms to help charter schools access facilities financing.

Charter schools also face rigorous accountability. These schools not only have to comply with the same accountability requirements as all other public schools, including the accountability requirements under ESSA, but they also face a rigorous approval process just to open their doors, and have to meet the expectations of the parents sending their children to the school.

(More)

Too often, students in underserved areas suffer from a lack of access to educational opportunities, and by default remain trapped in the failing status quo. When there is a community need for high-quality primary and secondary education, and the traditional public schools in the area are struggling to produce strong student outcomes, charter schools can offer students a lifeline.

In fact, charter schools can be the difference between a student dropping out of high school, and going on to pursue postsecondary education. Data reported by The 74 Million shows that charter school students from high-performing charter school networks graduate from college at three to five times the national average for children from low-income families.

I have had the immense privilege of hearing from countless charter school students and their parents, and they consistently tell me the same thing: that their local charter school provided them with new hope and opportunity when the traditional public schools in their area failed to pass muster.

Over the weekend, I saw that positive impact firsthand. I had the honor of speaking at the commencement ceremony for Millennium Charter Academy in my district – a school I’ve seen grow from the ground up into a thriving, exciting, and inspiring place. It is because of schools like Millennium Charter that more students in my district have a shot at building a prosperous life.

Today’s hearing presents an opportunity to examine the myriad ways that charter schools are changing lives. It also presents an opportunity to recommit to what matters most – giving more students the opportunity to receive an excellent education that inspires a lifelong love of learning.

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