

## November 8, 2016 - Ballot Question #2 Fact Sheet

Ballot Question #2 on November 8 asks citizens whether or not they support giving the state the ability to increase the number of charter schools that can operate in Massachusetts. Members of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District's administration and School Committee are frequently asked our opinion on the issue. While we are passionate supporters of public schools, we also recognize and respect individual citizens' right to choose. So toward informing those in our communities who may be curious about Question 2, we offer the following facts in the hope of helping you make the most informed voting decision possible:

### **A Little Background Information:**

- Charter schools are publicly funded, but independently operated schools. They originated in response to parental demand for more options, particularly in urban areas and districts that were perceived as underperforming.
- Charter schools are not subject to the policies and oversight of a community's local school committee.
- While areas where there is large parent demand receive priority, the state can approve a charter school regardless of the performance of a local district or how much community opposition there is to it being approved.
- While charter schools are publicly funded, they employ an application/admissions process not unlike those at private schools. This has enabled charter schools to be more selective in the student population they educate. As a result, many charter schools do not educate the kind of socially, intellectually and academically diverse population that we have in our public schools.
- A recent attempt at a compromise in the legislature, one in which lifting the charter school cap would be tied to additional funding for traditional public schools, was unsuccessful. As a result, Question 2 is on the November 8 ballot.

### **The Financial Impact**

- Despite school committees and local districts having no say over what occurs in charter schools within their communities, state funding is diverted from the public schools and given to the charter schools on a per student basis. For example:
  - When a student residing in Dudley or Charlton chooses to attend a charter school, the state pays the tuition rate to the charter school equal to the per pupil amount of our district (approximately \$10,500). The state then subtracts that amount from the funding it provides our district.
  - The state does provide some reimbursement for the money lost when district students attend charter schools. That reimbursement rate is set at 100% for the first year the student attends the charter school and 25% for the next five years after that. After that, there is no more reimbursement for the sending district.
    - It is, however, important to note that these reimbursements, also known as *Chapter 46* funding, are subject to available money and have not been fully funded the past four years. Last year, *Chapter 46* was funded at an all-time low of 63% (a \$47.1 million shortfall).

- This school year, it is estimated that \$450 million will be given to charter schools that would have otherwise gone to Massachusetts public schools.
- While the largest amounts lost were in Boston, Springfield and Worcester, this lost funding is not just a big city problem. This past year, many of our neighbors lost significant school funding to charter schools:\*
  - Auburn - \$158,600
  - Grafton - \$392,700
  - Leicester - \$118,600
  - Millbury - \$28,146
  - Oxford - \$307,086
  - Spencer-East Brookfield - \$32,269
  - Webster - \$79,148

***\*Source for funding figures: massteacher.org***

- Dudley-Charlton lost \$9,526 last year and \$16,655 the previous year
- Any charter school approved in our area (one is currently proposed for Old Sturbridge Village) could lead to more significant financial losses.

**Specifically about Ballot Question 2**

- Proposes to remove barriers to the expansion of charter schools across the state
- Would enable the state to approve as many as 12 new charter schools per year “where demonstrated parent demand for additional school options is greatest.”
  - It is important to note, however, that if there are fewer than 12 charter schools proposed in “high demand” areas like the big cities, the state can approve charter schools in any area.
- Would remove any limits on the number of charter schools that can be approved in a particular community at the same time
- Would cost public schools up to an additional \$100 million in 2017-18 which, when added to the aforementioned \$450 million, brings the grand total of public school dollars lost to charter schools to well above a half billion.

***Please contact the district office (508-943-6888) if you have specific questions related to Question 2.***