

Do charters take money from Cincinnati Public kids?

December 16, 2014

By Chrissy Thompson

COLUMBUS – Charter schools take away money intended to pay for the education of students who stay in the Cincinnati Public Schools system, [according to a report](#) by a group critical of Ohio's charter school system.

Ohio has delegated \$3,600 in state taxpayer money to pay for the education of each student who lives in the Cincinnati Public district. If a student attends a charter school instead, the district must contribute at least \$5,800 to the charter school – much more than the per-student amount it received from the state.

That puts a strain on school systems' ability to educate the children who are left in the district, said Stephen Dyer, a former Democratic state representative who now works at left-leaning think tank Innovation Ohio, which co-authored the study. Schools may have to cut programs, or they may have to ask voters to approve property or income tax hikes to help make up for the difference, he said.

"We need to find a way to fund charters that doesn't hurt kids who aren't in charters – which is the vast majority of students in Ohio," Dyer said Tuesday. Dyer's group authored the study with the Ohio Education Association, a longtime opponent of charter schools.

Democrats and teacher union groups – and, increasingly, Republicans – have called for increased oversight of the state's often low-performing charter schools, which are run by independent groups but paid for with taxpayer money.

Some of Southwest Ohio's three dozen charter schools are high-performing and well-run, but many have closed after financial problems or poor academic marks. Other charters have been marred by [criminal charges](#) and even [investigations by the FBI](#). The

links between some charter schools and powerful, GOP-leaning donors have increased the controversy surrounding the schools.

The report on the money going to charter schools comes within a week of two other studies critiquing Ohio's charter school system. Last week, a [Stanford University study](#) found Ohio's average public school student learned "significantly more" math and reading than students in charter schools. And [a study paid for by the conservative Fordham Institute](#) called on Ohio to increase ethical standards at charter schools and make it harder for low-performing charter school operators to stay in business in the state.

John Charlton, spokesman for the Ohio Department of Education, acknowledged the charter schools receive more money per student from Cincinnati Public than that district receives from the state. But that's just the way the Legislature set up the process of funding the schools, he said.

The \$5,800 that goes to charters "is a set amount that follows the student" to the charter, no matter how much the district receives from the state, he said. For instance, he said, charter schools in districts that receive more than \$5,800 per student complain of not receiving enough money from the state.

Department of Education studies have found no correlation between the amount of money a school district receives from the state and how well its students perform, he said.

Dyer suggested Ohio vary the money charter schools receive based on their academic performance. He also called on Ohio to consider paying for all charter schools directly from the state's budget instead of forcing district schools give up money to pay for charters.

In their report Tuesday, the Fordham Institute and the Boston-based Bellwether Education Partners suggested the opposite. Ohio could attract higher-performing national charter groups, the groups said, if it provided more money for charters, including by requiring districts to share property tax revenue with charter schools, instead of by funding the schools only with state tax money.

Original Article:

<http://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/2014/12/16/charter-schools-take-money-cincinnati-public-schools/20506391/>

