

Debating New Legislation Rules for Ohio Charters

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Recent studies have given low marks to **charter schools** in Ohio in comparison to charters in other states.

Governor Kasich is promising to take up the issue with legislation this year to improve charter school performance.

While Ohio charter schools average grade may not be very good, they do show a wide disparity with some scoring excellent ratings.

But Ohio's laws have been widely criticized as so lax that bad schools never flunk out.

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Charter advocates and critics alike are hoping the legislature will find a way to put the bad ones out of business. Aaron Churchill is from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Its foundation operates 10 charters in Ohio. He argues that charter schools make city schools better.

“Competition is good in terms of public institutions and in terms of private institutions as well,” he said. “I think there has to be safeguards in what people can and cannot do within a free market. “

For-profit companies running charters in Ohio have generally performed poorly but the president of the Ohio Association of Public Charter Schools, Darlene Chambers, said you can't just ban for-profits because some have excelled.

“Should it be for profit, not for profit,” she said. “There's good performance in both. It doesn't guide your ability to deliver quality. Not in what I'm observing.”

Politics may lead to unfair loopholes in legislation. That's the fear of Stephen Dyer, an analyst for the progressive think tank Innovation Ohio.

“The issue is two of the largest for-profit are also the biggest contributors to campaigns,” he said. “Between the two of those gentlemen, Bill Lager who runs the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow and David Brennan who runs White Hat schools, they've collected one out of four charter dollars ever spent in this state.”

One thing that all sides are hoping for is that legislation will provide for more transparency so parents can more easily choose their schools.

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