

## Charter schools offer a strong alternative

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

March 17, 2013

The March 10 op-ed column by Innovation Ohio president Janetta King, “Ohio’s charter schools: Costlier and worse,” includes much misinformation about public charter schools.

Ms. King asserts that charters “cost the state twice as much” as traditional public schools. But public charter schools do not receive local tax dollars. When a student leaves a traditional public school for a charter school, only state and federal funds follow. A true comparison (combining local, state, and federal revenue) reveals that, on average, charters receive \$2,000 less per pupil.

Her proposed solution — funding charters based on what they spend — is nonsensical. Charters spend less money than traditional public schools because they receive less. Under Ms. King’s circular reasoning, traditional schools that spend within their budgets should never receive increases either.

Public charters, on average, serve more minority and economically disadvantaged students. Suggesting that charters should receive minimal operational costs, but nearby traditional schools serving more advantaged students should be funded according to what educating students actually costs, is unconscionable.

Ms. King also rehashes the unproductive debate about which type of school is better, traditional or charter. Most people across the political spectrum have moved beyond this kind of zero-sum thinking, where the only losers are students. Variance in school quality depends not on whether the school is traditional or charter, but whether it has excellent leadership, high-quality teachers, and financial capacity.

Her claims that charter schools are unaccountable and low-performing are simply false. Ms. King compares charters to all public schools, ignoring the fact that most charters are in urban areas and that one-third serve at-risk populations, in such areas as special needs and dropout recovery.

Last year, 40 percent of urban charters received state grades of excellent or effective, compared to one-fourth of urban traditional schools. Because state law requires charters that fail to meet academic benchmarks for two out of three years to close — a consequence that doesn’t apply to poor-performing traditional schools — charters are more accountable.

In a speech on the night of his re-election last fall, President Obama urged the nation to unify around important civic goals, including ensuring that all students have access to an excellent education. His administration recognizes how public charter schools can help reach that goal.

Progressive groups such as Innovation Ohio should do the same and support all public schools that expand opportunity for students, rather than twisting the facts.

*STEPHANIE KLUPINSKI*

*Vice President Legal and Legislative Affairs Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools*

*Columbus*

**Original article:**

<http://www.toledoblade.com/Editorials/2013/03/17/Charter-schools-offer-a-strong-alternative.html>