

## Guest Commentary

### Poor-performing charter schools offer Ohio a false choice

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Some charter schools provide tremendous value in Ohio's public school system. The Toledo School for the Arts is one such school. But it is the exception in Ohio, not the rule.

In a recent guest column in The Blade, the president of the Ohio Association of Public Charter Schools suggested that the state's charter schools outperform traditional public schools. In fact, the opposite is true.

You can see the data for yourself at [KnowYourCharter.com](http://KnowYourCharter.com), a Web site developed by Innovation Ohio and the Ohio Education Association. We obtained all of our data from public sources, principally the Ohio Department of Education.

Charter schools that perform well give parents true choice and Ohio students a high-quality education. However, too many charter schools grossly underperform compared to traditional public schools, at staggeringly high rates.

Statewide, three out of four charter schools have performance index scores on their state report cards that are at or below those of Ohio's lowest-performing school districts. Among all report card grades, not just value-added scores, more than 40 percent of charter schools get grades of F.

Meanwhile, most traditional school district grades are A or B. Even in Ohio's urban core, traditional public schools have higher overall percentages of A and B grades, and lower percentages of D and F grades, than charter schools.

Asking parents to choose between a modestly performing public school and a poor-performing charter school is no choice at all. Ohio students deserve great public schools, whether they are traditional schools or taxpayer-funded charter schools.

Charter schools have proliferated in Ohio, while resources for higher-performing traditional public schools have declined. That has put a serious strain on our education system.

State aid to public schools has decreased by \$515 million over the past four years. In the same period, state money for charter schools has increased by the largest amount in a decade. In the past school year, the state transferred more than \$900 million to charter schools, despite a woeful overall performance record.

Every Ohio school district, not just urban districts, loses money to charter schools. School districts are required by law to subsidize charter schools with state funding allocated to the local district. Most children who attend charter schools left districts that outperformed those schools on the state's performance measures.

In Toledo, the state cut \$7.7 million from what the school district received two budgets ago. Add the \$73 million in state funding that is diverted from the district to charter schools each year, and students in Toledo Public Schools are left with 35 percent less in state revenue. These numbers reflect the fiscal strain that Ohio's charter schools and the state's leaders have put on our children and local taxpayers.

The sad reality is that only one in 10 charter school students in Ohio attends a high-performing school such as the Toledo School for the Arts. Too many charter schools are failing our children.

Ohio needs to ensure that high-quality educational opportunities are available to every student, not just more bad choices for choice's sake. Our kids deserve better.

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