



For Immediate Release:

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Education Department Begins Review of Charter School Practices and Policies

Department aims to develop recommendations by August 11

(Hartford, CT)—State Department of Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor today presented to the State Board of Education information on the launch of the Department’s review of existing rules and practices regarding the state’s oversight of charter schools. The Department’s comprehensive analysis, which will be done in partnership with state and national experts and stakeholders, will identify best practices from across the country.

“At the Governor’s direction, the Department is proceeding with a review of the state’s charter school policies and practices, as well as an analysis of best practices nationwide. Our goal is to improve our state’s oversight of charter schools in order to help ensure a strong system that safeguards against problems in the future,” Commissioner Pryor said. “As the special investigation regarding FUSE and Jumoke proceeds, we will also conduct an examination of improvements to the system as a whole.”

Among the main topics to be explored in the Department’s analysis will be the following:

- public transparency;
- the completion and reporting of background checks;
- strong accountability for student performance and equity;
- clearer expectations during the start-up process;
- improvements to the renewal process; and
- clarifications and stronger conditions under which schools would be expanded, placed on probation, or closed.

The Department will seek the input of multiple organizations for its analysis, including the National Governors Association (NGA), the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), charter school parents, other state-level departments of education, and other state and national entities.

The Department intends to complete its review and develop recommendations by August 11, 2014. Future policy recommendations or administrative changes regarding charter schools will be informed by the results of the review. Depending on the applicability of the specific recommendations, some policy and procedural changes might have broader implications for magnet schools, traditional local public schools, and other models.

Since the late 1990s, charter schools have contributed to Connecticut’s efforts to close the achievement gap by offering high-quality and innovative educational settings for students. As evidenced by the number of students on waiting lists, the demand for charter schools is high in Connecticut.

Currently, there are 18 state charter schools in operation in Connecticut serving approximately 7,100 students, which represents 1.3% of public school students. In total, there are 1,151 public schools and programs serving 545,614 public school students in Connecticut. By the 2015-16 school year, there are expected to be 23 state charter schools and one local charter school in operation in Connecticut.

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