



October 1, 2015

U.S. Department of Education
Secretary Arne Duncan
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Secretary Duncan,

I write with great dismay at the Department's lack of knowledge of serious controversies and scandal in Ohio's charter school system. Your Department's lack of knowledge of these critical problems is demonstrated by the \$71 million grant recently issued to Ohio for charter school expansion.

I cannot in my heart believe that if you understood the magnitude of the mismanagement and corruption in Ohio's charter school system you would have awarded the grant. I respectfully request that you suspend issuance of the grant. This award to such a failed and controversy riddled system is a disservice to taxpayers, parents and students.

The award comes in the midst of a season of heightened charter school scandal. Ohio's charter school system has a years-long history of failed performance with the vast majority of charter schools earning failed grades. News story after news story explain how charter operators disappear with public dollars under either fraudulent circumstances or simple mismanagement. And now, the Ohio Department of Education has participated in scrubbing data to make charters look better.

The individuals running charters are not alone; the Ohio Department of Education plays a role in the scandal. Just this summer, in its evaluation of charter school sponsors, the Ohio Department of Education deliberately left out F grades earned by online charter schools - some of which were created by large Republican donors - to falsely improve the appearance of those evaluations. The Columbus Dispatch reports that the ODE staff person responsible for this fraud, David Hansen, who has since resigned, was the author of the grant application you approved.

It is egregious that the state department will be allowed to choose who receives the federal grant money when it couldn't follow the law in conducting charter school oversight evaluations.

There was a spark of promise in creating accountability and transparency in the system recently with House Bill 2. Originally passed by the state House, then approved and strengthened by the state Senate, the House just yesterday refused to concur to make it law. The lack of action comes after heavy lobbying and influence, again, from many of the charter operators who make large campaign contributions to legislators here.

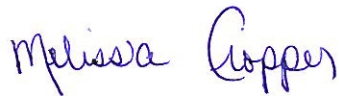
The Columbus Dispatch reports that the grant application wrongly touts the adoption of these reforms. As I write this letter, such legislation has yet to be approved so accountability measures are lacking.

For more than a decade it has been heavily documented that charter schools in Ohio are not serving children well. Our children, parents and taxpayers deserve to be treated with more respect. A more thoughtful review of federal funding for this troubled system would be a good start.

To give public dollars to Ohio to expand charters when the state has demonstrated that it cannot currently adequately and authentically monitor their operation is a mistake.

I sincerely hope that you and your staff will take another look at the controversy and scandal-ridden charter school system you intend to expand with \$71 million. I urge you to suspend the grant until Ohio can eliminate these problems.

Thank you for your consideration.



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