

**PHILADELPHIA CHARTERS FOR EXCELLENCE
TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY JURATE KROKYS, VICE PRESIDENT
FOR SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING ON SB 904
THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2011**

Thank you Senator Piccola and Members of the Education committee for allowing us to present testimony in support of SB 904.

I represent Philadelphia Charters for Excellence, a group of high performing charter schools in Philadelphia. Philadelphia charter schools are the 2nd largest school district in Pennsylvania based on enrollment – larger than Pittsburgh and Central Bucks (numbers 2&3) combined.

As you know from the many parents who contact your offices, and whom you interact with in your districts, parents want choice in education for their children. A recent Pew Study said 62% of parents in Philadelphia have actively considered sending their child to a charter or non-district run school. There is a reason for this: Philadelphia Charters are achieving real results through innovation in education: over 70% of charters in Philadelphia are making AYP, and charters provide enrichment and activities traditional public schools don't offer.

There is demand: there are over 30,000 students on waiting lists for charters in Philadelphia -- more than are enrolled in the Pittsburgh Public School District. Philadelphia charters requested nearly 10,000 additional "seats" in the last several years and the SRC granted just over 1,000. That leaves many of those children on waiting lists for another year.

PCE's mission is to represent, support, and expand charter schools that meet high standards of academic performance, fiscal management, and public governance.

We strongly believe in accountability for all public schools: traditional district and charter.

We accomplish our mission by:

- Creating standards of academic performance, fiscal management, and public governance to which all members adhere.
- Supporting charter schools to meet PCE's standards by sharing innovations and best practices. We are committed to the continuous improvement of our schools.
- Representing high quality charter schools in public policy discussions. This includes advocating the expansion of quality charter schools and the application of accountability standards consistently across all schools.

This is why we strongly support House Bill 1348 and its companion Senate Bill 904:

- It creates consistent, clear and transparent standards for charters and standardizes application, renewal and expansion processes.
- It demands accountability, which we support.
- It establishes an authorizing body that isn't in "competition" with charters.
- It provides fair funding for charters, which consistently do more with less than traditional district schools.

We urge you and your colleagues to expediently pass SB 904. The children and parents of the Commonwealth have waited long enough for choice in education.