

MODIFICATIONS TO CHARTER SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

2017 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Deidre M. Henderson

House Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE**General Description:**

This bill amends provisions of The Utah Charter Schools Act.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- requires the State Board of Education to adopt principles and standards for quality charter authorizing;

- requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules for the oversight of a charter school authorizer;

- amends provisions related to appointment of the staff director for the State Charter School Board;

- modifies the State Board of Education's authority to review an application for a charter school to the State Charter School Board;

- requires certain persons to be absent from portions of a meeting where a conflict of interest may arise; and

- makes technical corrections.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53A-1a-501.7, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2016, Chapters 144 and 271

53A-1a-505, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2014, Chapter 363

53A-1a-518, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2010, Chapter 162

ENACTS:

53A-1a-501.4, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53A-1a-501.4** is enacted to read:

53A-1a-501.4. Charter school authorizer standards -- State Board of Education rules for review of authorizer action.

(1) The State Board of Education shall adopt principles and standards for quality charter authorizing, including:

(a) principles that:

(i) maintain high education standards;

(ii) subject to law, uphold charter school autonomy; and

(iii) protect student and public interests; and

(b) standards that ensure:

(i) authorizer commitment and capacity;

(ii) a fair and reasonable application process and determination;

(iii) performance contracting;

(iv) ongoing oversight and evaluation; and

(v) fair and reasonable consequences for an authorizer that fails to comply with a statute, rule, or, as described in this Subsection (1), principles and standards.

(2) A charter school authorizer shall adopt and administer policies and practices consistent with the principles and standards described in Subsection (1).

(3) The State Board of Education shall, in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, make rules for the oversight of an authorizer, including:

(a) overseeing authorizer compliance with statute, as applicable, and the principals and standards described in Subsection (1) and the applicable policies and practices described in Subsection (2);

(b) rules that authorize assistance by the State Board of Education, if necessary, to an authorizer in an effort to comply; and

(c) penalties for an authorizer that fails, after reasonable notice, to comply, including a moratorium on the authorizer's authority to authorize a new charter school or enter into a contract.

Section 2. Section **53A-1a-501.7** is amended to read:

53A-1a-501.7. State Charter School Board -- Staff director -- Staff.

(1) ~~[(a)]~~ The State Charter School Board~~[, with the consent of the superintendent of public instruction,]~~ shall appoint a staff director for the State Charter School Board.

~~[(b)]~~ (2) The State Charter School Board shall have authority to remove the staff director ~~[with the consent of the superintendent of public instruction].~~

~~[(c)]~~ (3) The position of staff director is exempt from the career service provisions of Title 67, Chapter 19, Utah State Personnel Management Act.

(4) The State Charter school board may employ other staff as necessary.

~~[(2)]~~ (5) The superintendent of public instruction shall provide space for staff of the State Charter School Board in facilities occupied by the State Board of Education or the State Board of Education's employees~~[, with costs charged for the facilities equal to those charged other sections and divisions under the State Board of Education].~~

Section 3. Section **53A-1a-505** is amended to read:

53A-1a-505. Charter schools authorized by the State Charter School Board -- Application process -- Prohibited bases of application denial.

(1) (a) An applicant seeking authorization of a charter school from the State Charter School Board shall provide a copy of the application to the local school board of the school district in which the proposed charter school shall be located either before or at the same time it files its application with the State Charter School Board.

(b) The local board may review the application and may offer suggestions or recommendations to the applicant or the State Charter School Board prior to its acting on the application.

(c) The State Charter School Board shall give due consideration to suggestions or recommendations made by the local school board under Subsection (1)(b).

(d) The State Charter School Board shall review and, by majority vote, either approve

or deny the application.

(e) The State Board of Education shall, by majority vote, within 60 days after action by the State Charter School Board under Subsection (1)(d):

~~[(i) approve or deny an application approved by the State Charter School Board; or]~~

~~[(ii) hear an appeal, if any, of an application denied by the State Charter School Board.]~~

(i) certify that the action of the State Charter School Board complies with the rules adopted under Section 53A-1a-501.4; or

(ii) remand the decision to the State Charter School Board with written notice of noncompliance.

(f) The State Board of Education's action under Subsection (1)(d) is final action subject to judicial review.

(g) A charter school application may not be denied on the basis that the establishment of the charter school will have any or all of the following impacts on a public school, including another charter school:

(i) an enrollment decline;

(ii) a decrease in funding; or

(iii) a modification of programs or services.

(2) The State Board of Education shall make a rule providing a timeline for the opening of a charter school following the approval of a charter school application by the State Charter School Board.

(3) After approval of a charter school application and in accordance with Section 53A-1a-508, the applicant and the State Charter School Board shall set forth the terms and conditions for the operation of the charter school in a written charter agreement.

(4) The State Charter School Board shall, in accordance with State Board of Education rules, establish and make public the State Charter School Board's:

(a) application requirements, in accordance with Section 53A-1a-504;

(b) application process, including timelines, in accordance with this section; and

(c) minimum academic, financial, and enrollment standards.

Section 4. Section 53A-1a-518 is amended to read:

53A-1a-518. Regulated transactions and relationships -- Definitions -- Rulemaking.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Charter school officer" means:

(i) a member of a charter school's governing board;

(ii) a member of a board or an officer of a nonprofit corporation under which a charter school is organized and managed; or

(iii) the chief administrative officer of a charter school.

(b) (i) "Employment" means a position in which a person's salary, wages, pay, or compensation, whether as an employee or contractor, is paid from charter school funds.

(ii) "Employment" does not include a charter school volunteer.

(c) "Relative" means a father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law.

(2) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b), a relative of a charter school officer may not be employed at a charter school.

(b) If a relative of a charter school officer is to be considered for employment in a charter school, the charter school officer shall:

(i) disclose the relationship, in writing, to the other charter school officers;

(ii) submit the employment decision to the charter school's governing board for the approval, by majority vote, of the charter school's governing board;

(iii) abstain from voting on the issue; and

(iv) be absent from ~~[any]~~ the portion of the meeting ~~[when]~~ where the employment is being considered and determined.

(3) (a) Except as provided in Subsections (3)(b) and (3)(c), a charter school officer or a relative of a charter school officer may not have a financial interest in a contract or other transaction involving a charter school in which the charter school officer serves as a charter school officer.

(b) If a charter school's governing board considers entering into a contract or executing a transaction in which a charter school officer or a relative of a charter school officer has a financial interest, the charter school officer shall:

(i) disclose the financial interest, in writing, to the other charter school officers;

(ii) submit the contract or transaction decision to the charter school's governing board

152 for the approval, by majority vote, of the charter school's governing board;
153 (iii) abstain from voting on the issue; and
154 (iv) be absent from [~~any~~] the portion of the meeting [~~when~~] where the contract or
155 transaction is being considered and determined.
156 (c) The provisions in Subsection (3)(a) do not apply to a reasonable contract of
157 employment for:
158 (i) the chief administrative officer of a charter school; or
159 (ii) a relative of the chief administrative officer of a charter school whose employment
160 is approved in accordance with the provisions in Subsection (2).
161 (4) The State Board of Education or State Charter School Board may not operate a
162 charter school.

Legislative Review Note
Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel