

BPS PARENTS URGE SENATORS TO REJECT CHARTER CAP EXPANSION

PRESS RELEASE

Date: July 1, 2014

Contact:

qualityforeverystudent@gmail.com [personal information of press contacts removed]

The Boston Public Schools parent group Quest (Quality Education for Every Student) today urged members of the Massachusetts Senate to reject a bill under consideration to loosen the current cap on charter school growth.

“District schools are losing the resources they need to succeed, and lots of that money is going to charter schools. This is not the time to expand the number of charters,” said Karen Oil, parent of a child at the Young Achievers School in Mattapan. H. 4108 would allow charter schools to expand in urban districts, including Boston. Under the proposed legislation, the percent of Chapter 70 state education funding allotted to Boston charters, which currently stands at 42%, could easily increase to more than 50%. No mechanism exists in the bill to guarantee even a partial reimbursement of the funds districts lose to charters.

Relying on state data, Quest insisted that, despite four years of “enhanced accountability measures,” charter schools continue to serve less Students with Special Needs and English Language Learners. According to Oil, “Well-paid lobbyists for Race to the Top and other charter boosters can twist the figures however they want, but they can’t get away from the fact that charter schools are counseling out Students with Special Needs and pushing many of them out when they do get in. It’s even worse for English Language Learners, who aren’t getting in at all. That means that the public schools must educate higher percentages of these children with fewer resources. It just can’t work this way. More charters will only make the situation more impossible.”

“We’re not making up the public school budget crisis. Teachers and para-professionals have the pink slips to prove it, and seventh graders in Boston won’t have school buses next year,” said Kevin Murray, another Quest member. “Here comes the legislature with its can of gas to smother the blaze.” The Senate is considering H. 4108 in the wake of the Boston City Council’s approval of a schools budget from Mayor Walsh that cuts over 200 teachers and paraprofessionals and withdraws school bus services from seventh and eighth grade students.

QUEST asks members to consider the negative impact raising the charter cap would have on the 57,000 students—78% of whom are low income—who attend Boston Public Schools. Raising the charter cap will also affect thousands more students attending other urban districts in the Commonwealth. Boston students in middle schools are being pushed off buses and, as charter schools expand, future cuts will hurt vulnerable children and erode the gains district schools are making across Massachusetts.