

MORE THAN 1000 SIGN BOSTON PARENT GROUP PETITION TO FULLY FUND EDUCATION AND KEEP CHARTER CAP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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QUEST petition: <http://bit.ly/1djUn4c>

Today, Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST) presented the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education with a petition demanding that the Commonwealth provide adequate funding for public education and maintain the current cap on charter school expansion. The petition urges committee co-chairs Alice Peisch and Sonia Chang-Diaz to not advance bills for charter expansion.

QUEST, a volunteer group representing parents at over 30 Boston Public Schools, developed the petition in response to pro-charter advertising and lobbying campaigns by well-funded groups like the Pioneer Institute and The Boston Foundation.

As QUEST member and BPS parent Maura O'Toole put it, "We wanted elected officials to hear from parents, not just big name foundations that are spending so much money to lift the charter cap. We're not rich, but our voices matter."

The petition drew signatories from neighborhoods across Boston, sending a loud message to Mayor Walsh and State House leaders. As a signer from Allston said, "As a BPS parent facing yet more cuts at my school that is already stretched thin -- I am not interested in subsidizing charter programs." An East Boston signer expressed frustration with proposals to lift the charter cap, at a time when Boston district schools face deep budget cuts, and when charters continue to not serve all students. "Enough with additional charters! We need more resources for the public schools which care for more special needs and ESL [English as Second Language] students." A signer from Mattapan wrote, "A quality education is a civil right... Shame on Massachusetts. Let's spend the time, energy and money to improve ALL schools for All children."

The QUEST petition points out that the \$87.5 million the state gives to two dozen charter schools represents 42% of the total amount of Chapter 70 aid given to the city's schools, resulting in inadequate and inequitable funding. One parent signatory from Jamaica Plain commented: "Our children deserve funding equal to the kids in other towns, particularly given our high rates of poverty, before we even think about expanding an unproven and uneven charter system!"