

# THE Center for Education Reform



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**Fax Alert**

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## **CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MARYLAND?**

**NOT YET...**

**Or**

## **WHY MONTGOMERY COUNTY WON'T HAVE CHARTERS**

Yesterday some of you reported on Montgomery County's decision to O.K. charter schools for the county. This move was sparked by the growing interest of community parents and teachers, and the legislature's attempts last year to have a study done on charters.

We wanted to help you put this in context.

Thirty-three states and the District of Columbia are currently home to charter school laws that permit a variety of organizations and individuals to start these new forms of public schools.

**MARYLAND IS NOT ONE OF THESE STATES.**

**CHARTER SCHOOLS DO NOT EXIST SOLELY BECAUSE A COUNTY OR DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD DECIDED TO CREATE A POLICY ALLOWING THEM. REAL CHARTER SCHOOLS REQUIRE A STATE LAW TO MAKE THEM CHARTER SCHOOLS.**

Even state laws, however, don't guarantee that a charter is really a charter. Take nearby Virginia, for example. Virginia's law is so weak (i.e. doesn't allow for the growth of charters) that even the U.S. Department of Education withheld federal charter start-up funds.

What makes for a real charter school? If you'd like to find out, just look at a few of the more than one thousand charter schools currently operating in 28 states, educating over one quarter of a million children.

The entities that can approve charters vary from state to state. While most states allow school boards to be part of the process, the best charter laws permit more than one chartering authority. Charters are charters **BECAUSE THEY ARE FREE FROM OFFICIAL TIES TO THE DISTRICT OR COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**, not because a school board says it will now permit them.

Baltimore claims it has a charter school, too, but in reality, the Stadium school is simply an alternative school that the School Board there has permitted to operate free from some basic regulations. What separates **REAL** charters from **IMITATIONS** is whether the school has complete freedom from district and state rules governing spending, curriculum, hiring, firing, and whether the school is completely open to students by choice.

To get in touch with real charter schools, or to learn more about the concept, contact the Center for Education Reform at 1-800-521-2118, by email at [cer@edreform.com](mailto:cer@edreform.com), or visit our website at [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com).

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