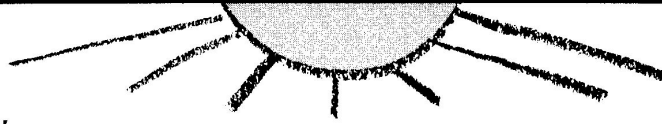


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 29, 2004

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BALTIMORE COMMUNITY DEMANDS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL OPTIONS *City Council, Parents Send Loud Message to School Officials*

Baltimore, Md. – Over one hundred community leaders, parents and children showed up at last night’s Baltimore City Council hearing to urge local school officials to lift a cap on charter schools. Community leaders claim the cap is designed to discourage the growth of charters in Baltimore – a city currently home to over 50 failing traditional schools.

“We all have agreement on the goals of education, of its importance,” said Reverend Eric Wheeler, local parent and education advocate. “Charter schools are a great way to get parents involved and ensure the success of their own child’s education.”

The General Assembly passed a charter school law last year that enabled Maryland to use the innovative model that has been successful in raising student achievement across the country. The city’s school board restricted Baltimore to only three charter schools and delayed any consideration until at least the fall. Advocates estimate that between 15 and 20 organizations are seeking, or plan to seek public charters in Baltimore.

Councilwoman Catherine Pugh (4th District) introduced a resolution that questions the Board’s restrictions on charter schools and notes the lack of educational or fiscal research to support its decision.

“This is really about creating a movement that makes the whole [school] system better,” said Pugh.

(more)

Aisha Isackson joined other local parents to propose the City Neighbors Charter because she didn't want to flee to the suburbs to find educational opportunities for her two children. She hoped to see City Neighbors Charter open its doors to Baltimore children this fall, but their application remains stalled with the school board.

"Parents in Baltimore want the charter school option," Isackson testified. "Limiting the number of charters creates undue tension and discourages parents from being involved. People are leaving Baltimore because of poor schools – through our charter school we hope to give people a reason to stay"

Dale Johnson, a local school system administrator, commented that the interest in public charters was "striking," and committed to "take that message back" to the school board and the district's chief executive officer.

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The Center for Education Reform (CER) is a national advocacy and research organization working with states and communities to provide more choices in education and better schools for all children.

For more information, contact CER at (202) 822-9000 or visit www.edreform.com.