

THE Center for Education Reform



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The Honorable Robert Ehrlich
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Governor Ehrlich:

I am writing to express gratitude for your commitment to Maryland's children. I was delighted to learn about the recent announcement that Lt. Governor Steele will lead a commission on education policy that will include in its charge a much needed push to support charter schools in Maryland.

As you know, the Center for Education Reform initiated a project to support the development of charter schools in your state. Over the past 12 months, we have convened parents, community groups and policy makers, we have enhanced the quality of the applications submitted, and we have mobilized parents and teachers to advocate for more flexible charter school policies.

It is clearer than ever that there is tremendous demand from citizens across the state to bring charter schools to Maryland. Perhaps more important it indicates that there is a growing organized constituency to advocate for changes in local policies and to the Maryland charter school law. The Center for Education Reform has developed a plan to build support for, and a strong commitment to improving the state's charter law. Among the most important recommended changes to the law are the following:

- To create additional chartering authorities, including 4-year public universities and mayors of certain targeted cities,
- To create a binding appeals process to give the state board final authority on decisions made on appeal,
- To give charter school governing boards full fiscal and legal autonomy in the operation and overall management of the school,
- To clarify the definition of "commensurate" funding for charter schools; and
- To provide charter schools with an automatic waiver from most state and local regulations

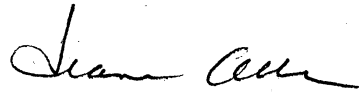
Just last week, ten applications for new charter schools were received by the Baltimore City public school system. This is a tremendous demonstration that parents and teachers are willing to work hard to provide better options for students, despite resistance from the local school board. We are aware of other groups in the city and throughout the rest of the state that are beginning work now and looking toward

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opening in 2006. In order for these schools to open and operate as genuinely independent charter schools, the law needs to be improved and the restrictive county policies need to be amended.

Governor Ehrlich – we would like to participate in the first commission meeting and provide its members with the specific recommendations on how to ensure the development and growth of the charter movement in Maryland. We stand ready to support the work of the commission, and look forward to working with its members in the months ahead.

Best Regards,



Jeanne Allen
President

cc: Mr. Jervis Finney, Chief Counsel