

May 29, 2015

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Charters do more
to improve education**

The suggestion by one Sun Sentinel reader to "Improve Public Schools by Limiting Charter Schools" on May 27 is the most ill-advised notion any policymaker could take under consideration.

Florida's strong charter school law undoubtedly helped innovative schools thrive, but parent demand for alternatives far outstrips supply. The Florida DOE estimates annually 30,000-100,000 students apply to a charter but are wait-listed. Most of these predominantly low-income students are vying for a chance to escape zoned underperforming traditional public schools.

A poll found that 81 percent of Floridians with school-aged children strongly support the creation of public charter schools. They are popular for good reason. Of the 420 charters to receive letter grades on the Florida DOE's 2014 School Accountability Report, 41 percent received an "A" compared with 34 percent of traditional public schools.

State lawmakers need to create conditions to allow new charter schools to develop, ensure the replication of existing successful models and fund public school students attending charter schools equitably.

Lawmakers must find the means to hold every public school option in Florida accountable. Charter schools have demonstrated this is possible, and parents are demanding it. Decades of throwing good money after bad never actually made traditional public education improve. It was the advent of parent choice that did and must continue to be the centerpiece of any effort to improve educational outcomes for Florida's children. Charter schools are just one piece of that puzzle, but an extremely important one that is creating a ripple effect statewide.

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