

# Today's Letters: State Board of Ed has the authority

By LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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**Re: *They are right to fight Nov. 25, editorial***

## **State Board of Ed has the authority**

The editorial clearly mischaracterizes the purpose and authority of the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission. The commission has not "seized" authority from school districts, nor did it have any authoritative role in denying district's exclusive control over charter schools.

It is the Florida Board of Education, not the commission, that reviewed school district treatment of charter schools and determined that many districts could not show they had treated their charter schools in a fair and equitable manner. The commission is simply an alternative entity to local school districts for the development, promotion and monitoring of charter schools throughout the state. Far from being stripped of autonomy and control, school districts still have the ability to approve, sponsor and oversee charter schools.

In fact, many charter schools will remain under contract with their local school district and many more new schools are likely to apply to local school districts in coming years. A large percentage of charter schools enjoy healthy relationships with their local district.

However, the fact that only three school districts could meet the state Board of Education's standard of fair treatment suggests that charter school mistreatment by their district sponsors exists on more than just "an isolated level."

The establishment of the commission is another step forward for education in Florida, where laws already allow a flexible framework for implementing and improving the K-12 public education system in a manner that is responsive to evolving needs. For example, the public education system includes the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, the Florida Virtual School, and charter lab schools. These programs offer K-12 public education options that operate independently of any school district. The commission is nothing more than a further extension of such options within the state Board of Education's constitutional authority over the entire system of public education.

The establishment of the commission as an additional charter sponsor was supported by many state and national organizations, including the Florida League of Cities and numerous mayors throughout the state who have an interest in promoting educational options for parents. The concept of multiple sponsors of charter schools has worked well in numerous other states around the country and there is good reason to think it will work in Florida, as well.

Perhaps our districts would be better served to spend public money in our classrooms and on our children rather than on lawsuits and legal fees to challenge a concept that has yet to have a chance to work.

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