

# ATTACHMENT 1

Testimony before the Senate Education Committee

January 22, 2015

Mr. Chairman, my name is Jane Wittmeyer, and I am the Manager of the Coalition of Idaho Charter School Families. Thank you for providing time today to allow me to speak to the Committee regarding the Coalition and the issues of importance to the members of the Coalition.

The Coalition is made up of parents, students, families, teachers and supporters of Idaho Charter Schools. It was formed in 2006 in support of the effort to expand public school choice, provide public school alternatives and improve education in Idaho. You may remember us as the group that holds the large Rally on the Statehouse steps. It has always been the Coalition's Signature event to celebrate school Choice in Idaho and to urge Idaho's Legislature to support and expand school Choice in the state. We invite you to the 2015 Capitol Steps Rally on Tuesday, January 27. We would love to see you all there!

The mission of the Coalition is to promote and advocate for public policy that furthers the advancement of charter schools and the innovations in education they represent. The Coalition works to ensure that every Idaho student has equal access to the option of enrolling in a public charter school whether it offers instruction in a traditional classroom or a virtual setting.

Charter Schools are pioneers and innovators, they are open to all students, they appeal to teachers because of the opportunity to innovate, and they meet parents' needs by providing public education choice. They are publicly funded--Charter schools are public schools. And importantly, Charter school legislation honors the right of parents to make informed choices about their child's education by tying state education money to the child, not to the neighborhood school.

As this committee and the larger legislative body act to improve k-12 education in Idaho, please keep a few things in mind.

There are many things the Idaho Legislature could do to help support school choice options in Idaho. We support the following:

- Legislation that provides for funding that follows the child so each Idaho Student has equal funding. An example: enrollment timing needs to be refined. Currently funding is "front loaded" into the first 10 weeks of school. When a student leaves the school after the first 10 weeks, the next receiving school gets no funding but is responsible for teaching the student. The school that receives the student is severely underfunded. This punishes both the school and the child. Alternate schools, virtual schools, credit recovery schools and rural schools are hardest hit by this current policy.
- Increased facilities funding for charter schools;
- Creation of a revolving loan fund to assist with facilities costs;
- The right to participate in school bond elections alongside other public schools;
- Renewal of the current Museums, Schools and Libraries tax credit is due to sunset at the end of this year.

Mr. Chairman I want to personally thank you and the other members of the Committee for providing time in the Committee schedule for the voices of school choice representatives. I am a poor substitute for the parents and students but I will be bringing them to meet Committee member soon. These are busy parents as they are very involved in the education of their children. The Coalition President and Vice President are members of a Cooperative School which meets every Thursday morning, thus they were unable to attend and speak at this hearing. While legislators are very used to seeing representatives of establishment education groups in the Committee room on a regular basis, some of the most important components of the education system, parents and students, are too often forgotten, over looked or marginalized.

On behalf of the Coalition Board and its members, I thank you for your time and attention.