

# Attachment 5

## Testimony before the Senate Education Committee

January 13, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee--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, which is a 501(c) (4) entity, 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 2016 Capitol Steps Rally on January 27. We anticipate over 1500 students, parents, teachers, and other Idahoans who support school choice. 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 schools honor 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 through 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—for instance, enrollment timing, is an example of funding needing to follow the child for virtual programs, alternative schools and many rural districts.** Funding needs to reflect the mobility of the student population. Currently, the funding is front loaded, and if a student moves, for whatever reason, after the first 10 weeks, the school that receives the student is severely underfunded--which unfairly punishes both the receiving school and the child. These schools are safety nets for a mobile student population. Safety net schools should be encouraged to educate these students and should be fully funded for their efforts. The real losers under the current funding approach are the students.
- 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;

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 the Capitol again this Session to meet Committee members and let their voices be heard. These are busy parents as they are very involved in the education of their children. 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.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks.