

# Attachment 5

## Testimony before the Senate Education Committee January 16, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee--my name is Jane Wittmeyer, and I am the Manager of the Coalition of Idaho Charter School Families. I am filling in today for President Tom LeClaire who was unable to be here.

If he was here he would thank you for providing time today 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.

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.

**There are many things the Idaho Legislature could do to help support school choice options in Idaho, such as:**

- **There is an urgent need to revamp the Idaho Charter School Commission. The current process is designed to eliminate Charters-not assist them in being successful.** Current charter school law requires that the Idaho Public Charter School Commission (PCSC) to audit charter schools that "under perform" and close them. The main factors that bring about a low performance rating according to the PCSC are student performance on standardized tests. The Coalition strongly opposes this law. This process, in addition to regular renewal of charters, will force many charter schools to constantly fight with the PCSC just to keep operating. All of the charter schools in Idaho add to the school choice options available to parents and students. The market should be the main regulator of charter schools. If certain charter schools are really "under performing," parents will stop sending their children to them. At the very least, the PCSC should be required to conduct a public meeting to explain why a charter school may close and hear testimony from parents and teachers to understand why the school is supported and is valuable and should not close. Policy makers need to understand that PCSC process is already

**underway. We expect that between now and next year's legislature, a charter school or two could be forced to close.**

- **In addition Coalition members ask for increased facilities funding for charter schools; these schools should have the right to participate in school bond elections alongside other public schools;**
- **The Coalition supports additional 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.**

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. The voices of parents, students, and teachers should be first in these discussions; unfortunately they are usually left out. On behalf of the “voices of choice”, I thank you for your time and attention.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks.

## RENEWAL SCHEDULE FOR PCSC-AUTHORIZED SCHOOLS

Statute requires that the performance certificates for existing schools ensure all schools will be evaluated for renewal or nonrenewal between March 2016 and March 2019. The PCSC will schedule initial renewal considerations for the existing schools it authorizes based on their 2013 Star ratings. In order to protect taxpayer interests, lower scoring schools will be considered first. However, all schools will receive at least two, annual reports from the PCSC prior to the year in which they will be considered for renewal or non-renewal, permitting ample time to correct any shortcomings.

In accordance with statute, new schools will receive performance certificates with an initial term of three years, and will be added to this schedule accordingly.

### March 2017

School	2013 Star Rating	2012 Star Rating	Opening Year	Age at Renewal
Heritage Academy	1	1	2011	6
iSucceed Virtual High School (iSVHS)	1	1	2008	9
Kootenai Bridge Academy (KBA)	1	1	2009	8
Wings Charter Middle School (WCMS)	1	1	2009	8
Idaho Connects Online (ICON)	2	1	2009	8
Another Choice Virtual School (ACVS)	2	1	2010	7
Richard McKenna Charter High School	1 / 3	3	2002	15
American Heritage Charter School (AHCS)	N/A	N/A	2013	4
Chief Tahgee Elementary Academy (CTEA)	N/A	N/A	2013	4
Odyssey Charter School	N/A	N/A	2013	4
Syringa Mountain School	N/A	N/A	2014	3
Bingham Academy	N/A	N/A	2014	3

### March 2018

School	2013 Star Rating	2012 Star Rating	Opening Year	Age at Renewal
The Village Charter School (TVCS)	3	2	2011	7
Idaho Science and Technology Charter School (ISTCS)	3	3	2009	9
Idaho Virtual Academy (IDVA)	3	3	2002	16
INSPIRE Connections Academy	3	3	2005	13
Falcon Ridge Public Charter School (FRPCS)	3	4	2000	18
Monticello Montessori Charter School	4	2	2010	8
Palouse Prairie School of Expeditionary Learning (PPSEL)	4	2	2009	9
Heritage Community Charter School (HCCS)	4	2	2011	7
Legacy Charter School	4	3	2011	7
North Idaho STEM Charter Academy (NI STEM)	4	N/A	2012	6
Rolling Hills Public Charter School (RHPCS)	4	4	2005	13

**March 2019**

<b>School</b>	<b>2013 Star Rating</b>	<b>2012 Star Rating</b>	<b>Opening Year</b>	<b>Age at Renewal</b>
Academy at Roosevelt Center, The	4	4	2006	13
Blackfoot Charter Community Learning Center (BCCLC)	4	4	2000	19
Sage International School of Boise	4	4	2010	9
Taylor's Crossing Public Charter School (TCPCS)	4	4	2006	13
Xavier Charter School (XCS)	4	4	2007	12
Compass Public Charter School	5	5	2005	14
Liberty Charter School	5	4	1999	20
North Valley Academy (NVA)	5	4	2008	11
Victory Charter School	5	4	2004	15
Vision Charter School	5	4	2007	12
White Pine Charter School (WPCS)	5	4	2003	16