
EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On
“Building on What Works at Charter Schools”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Building on What Works at Charter Schools.”*

Today our committee meets to examine how we can build on what is working at outstanding charter schools as we continue our efforts to improve educational opportunities for all Americans.

This hearing will explore the factors that contribute to successful charter schools, as well as the barriers these schools face.

We’ll also take a look at how high-performing charter schools can help inform school reform efforts. Many exceptional charter schools have already blazed a trail for others to follow.

The first charter school opened its doors in 1992. Nearly two decades later, there are 4,600 charter schools in 40 states, serving over 1.4 million children.

Their success stories are proof that charter schools are an integral part of building a world-class American education system.

Many of these high-performing charter schools are laboratories of innovation.

Some of the most promising school reform strategies in recent years have been embraced by many leading charter schools. This includes extending learning time, hiring excellent teachers, raising expectations, using data-driven research and focusing relentlessly on results.

They are proving that we can address disparities and close the achievement gap when we apply the right reforms and resources.

They are proving that low-income and minority students, the exact populations that too often get left behind, are in fact able to succeed.

Take, for example, the Roxbury Prep charter school in Boston, whose student body is composed almost entirely of minorities.

Of the 230 students attending Roxbury Prep, nearly 70 percent qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Roxbury Prep currently stands as one of the highest-performing middle schools in Massachusetts. On the 2008 state exam, students at Roxbury Prep outperformed nearly 80 percent of all middle schools statewide.

Another great example is the Knowledge Is Power Program – or KIPP. There are more than 16,000 students enrolled in 65 KIPP charter schools in 19 states and the District of Columbia.

Over 80 percent of KIPP students qualify for free or reduced price meals, 63 percent are African American, and 33 percent are Hispanic.

KIPP students start fifth grade with average scores in the 41st percentile in math and the 31st percentile in language arts. By the end of eighth grade, their scores nearly doubled.

More than 80 percent of students who complete the eighth grade at KIPP go on to college.

Or take the Harlem Children's Zone, whose mission is to do whatever it takes to help children succeed, combining charter schools with community services for children from birth to college graduation. Their successes are off the charts.

The program has effectively closed the achievement gap in mathematics between black and white students in New York City – which in turn will open new doors and create new opportunities. They've also nearly closed the gap in language arts.

For the sixth year in a row, 100 percent of graduates from Harlem Children Zone's pre-K program were found to be school-ready. In April, three female middle school students from the program won the national chess championship for their age group.

These schools, and others like them, show an emergence of a different educational culture. The students who were previously thought of as unable to benefit from a public education are outperforming their peers.

They're going to college and they're getting the jobs of the future.

They're mastering the skills needed to succeed and thrive in a 21st century global economy.

These are models we can learn from to boost student achievement and improve accountability on a larger scale.

Both President Obama and Secretary Duncan are outspoken advocates for charter schools.

They agree that many of the bold reforms that are fundamental to building world-class schools are already happening in charter schools.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act included an unprecedented \$5 billion Race to the Top Fund that gives Secretary Duncan the tools to drive innovative reforms in schools.

Among other things, he could use this fund to ask state legislatures to allow more charter schools, while ensuring that states maintain rigorous accountability.

I am confident he'll keep charter schools in mind as he decides how to use the fund.

We know that we can't invest any more money, time or energy in the status quo.

Significant changes are needed to truly improve our schools, to make sure students graduate with 21st century skills, and to cultivate a workforce that can compete globally

That's why we're here today.

Outstanding charter schools are helping millions of students learn, grow and thrive. The teachers in these schools are making the strides we need every teacher, in every classroom to make.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here today. Your expertise will be very helpful as we work to reward and replicate your impressive work in classrooms across the country.

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