

**To:** Chairwoman Turner and the Senate Education Committee

**From:** Christopher Emigholz – Director of Education & Workforce Development Policy  
New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA)

**Date:** February 9, 2009

**Re:** **S-60 (Rice) – Potentially Restricts Charter School Application Process**

---

Good afternoon and thank you for considering NJBIA's perspective. My name is Christopher Emigholz, the Director of Education & Workforce Development Policy for the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA), and on behalf of our 22,000 members, I have some concerns about S-60. NJBIA is committed to improving the quality of New Jersey schools, while controlling their escalating costs, and charter schools are a great tool for both of those goals. NJBIA wants to ensure that this bill does nothing to restrict the charter school process further than current statute and NJDOE regulations.

Charter schools are an important part of the public school choice framework that New Jersey currently provides its students, and these options need to be enhanced and expanded, **not restricted**. Whether a student is enrolling in an academy, magnet school, another school-within-a-school option, a vocational-technical school or a charter school, the State of New Jersey should try to ensure that there are enough innovative public school opportunities open to any student interested in pursuing them. The State should also try to make sure that the available options truly provide a different and innovative educational experience that will allow students to be exposed to new and varied ways to prepare for the workforce. Charter schools and these other education options allow schools to better shape instruction and the learning environment to meet student needs, producing students with diverse interests and greater awareness of the myriad of real world options and career opportunities. Charters are also often forced to do more with less, and thus can serve as a best practice for efficiency. Allowing a truly diverse and plentiful population of charter schools helps the future workforce and the current taxpayer.

NJBIA understands the sponsor's concerns about charter school applications that have no business in ever being considered for approval, but that is why the NJDOE rejects many applications already and uses the tools in S-60 to do so. It would be devastating for the children of New Jersey if every charter school application turned into a school, but that is certainly not the case.

NJBIA is concerned about S-60 because the State should not be any more restrictive than the NJDOE's current application process. NJBIA trusts that the NJDOE will reject charter applications that cannot demonstrate how they will offer students a quality education option in a safe and stable environment, but applicants should not be forced to go through any more obstacles than they currently do. The State should not put obstacles in front of new charter schools, but instead help potentially good charter schools become a reality.

NJBIA thanks you for listening to our perspective on charter schools and hopes that this committee will ensure that S-60 does not go any further than the current charter school application process already does.