

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

1 State of Arkansas
2 89th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2013
4

As Engrossed: H3/1/13 H3/4/13

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1528

5 By: Representatives Biviano, Clemmer, Cozart, Deffenbaugh, Eubanks, Hobbs, Lenderman, Lowery,
6 *Jean*
7 By: Senator A. Clark
8

For An Act To Be Entitled

10 AN ACT TO DESIGNATE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AS
11 THE PRIMARY CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER; AND FOR OTHER
12 PURPOSES.
13
14

Subtitle

16 TO DESIGNATE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
17 AS THE PRIMARY CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER.
18
19

20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
21

22 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-23-101 is amended to read as follows:
23 6-23-101. Title.

24 This chapter shall be known and cited as the "Arkansas Quality Charter
25 Schools Act of ~~1999~~ 2013".
26

27 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code §§ 6-23-103 - 6-23-106 are amended to read as
28 follows:

29 6-23-103. Definitions.

30 As used in this chapter:

31 (1) "Application" means the proposal for obtaining conversion
32 public charter school status, open-enrollment public charter school status,
33 or limited public charter school status;

34 (2) "Authorizer" means an entity that authorizes a charter,
35 which may be either the:

36 (A) Department of Education; or



1 (B) State Board of Education acting under § 6-23-703;

2 (3) “Charter” means a performance-based contract for an initial
3 five-year period between the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer and an
4 approved applicant for public charter school status that exempts the public
5 charter school from state and local rules, regulations, policies, and
6 procedures specified in the contract and from the provisions of this title
7 specified in the contract;

8 ~~(3)~~(4) “Conversion public charter school” means a public school
9 that has converted to operating under the terms of a charter approved by the
10 local school board and the ~~state board~~ authorizer;

11 ~~(4)~~(5) “Eligible entity” means:

12 (A) A public institution of higher education;

13 (B) A private nonsectarian institution of higher
14 education;

15 (C) A governmental entity; or

16 (D) An organization that:

17 (i) Is nonsectarian in its program, admissions
18 policies, employment practices, and operations; and

19 (ii) Has applied for tax exempt status under §
20 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

21 ~~(5)~~(6) “Founding member” means any individual who is either:

22 (A) A member or an employee of the eligible entity
23 applying for the initial charter for an open-enrollment public charter
24 school; or

25 (B) A member of the initial governing nonadvisory board of
26 the open-enrollment public charter school;

27 ~~(6)~~(7) “Limited public charter school” means a public school
28 that has converted to operating under the terms of a limited public charter
29 approved by the local school board and the ~~state board~~ authorizer;

30 ~~(7)~~(8) “Local school board” means a board of directors
31 exercising the control and management of a public school district;

32 ~~(8)~~(9)(A) “Open-enrollment public charter school” means a public
33 school that:

34 (i) Is operating under the terms of a charter
35 granted by the ~~state board~~ authorizer on the application of an eligible
36 entity;

1 (ii) May draw its students from any public school
2 district in this state; and

3 (iii) Is a local educational agency under the
4 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 7801, as it
5 existed on April 10, 2009,

6 (B) "Open-enrollment public charter school" also possesses
7 the same meaning as given the term "charter school" in the Elementary and
8 Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 7221i, as it existed on April
9 10, 2009;

10 ~~(9)~~(10) "Parent" means any parent, legal guardian, or other
11 person having custody or charge of a school-age child;

12 ~~(10)~~(11) "Public school" means a school that is part of a public
13 school district under the control and management of a local school board; and

14 ~~(11)~~(12) "Public charter school" means a conversion public
15 charter school, an open-enrollment public charter school, or a limited public
16 charter school.

17
18 6-23-104. Charter form for public charter schools – Requirements –
19 Revision.

20 (a) A charter for a public charter school shall:

21 (1) Be in the form of a written contract signed by the
22 ~~Chair of the State Board~~ Commissioner of Education and the chief operating
23 officer of the public charter school;

24 (2) Satisfy the requirements of this chapter; and

25 (3) Ensure that the information required under § 6-23-404
26 is consistent with the information provided in the application and any
27 modification that the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer may require.

28 (b) Any revision or amendment of the charter for a public charter
29 school may be made only with the approval of the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

30
31 6-23-105. Basis and procedure for public charter school probation or
32 charter modification, revocation, or denial of renewal.

33 (a) The ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer may place a public charter
34 school on probation or may modify, revoke, or deny renewal of its charter if
35 the ~~state board~~ authorizer determines that the persons operating the public
36 charter school:

1 (1) Committed a material violation of the charter, including
2 failure to satisfy accountability provisions prescribed by the charter;

3 (2) Failed to satisfy generally accepted accounting standards of
4 fiscal management;

5 (3) Failed to comply with this chapter or other applicable law
6 or regulation; or

7 (4) Failed to meet academic or fiscal performance criteria
8 deemed appropriate and relevant for the public charter school by the ~~state~~
9 ~~board~~ authorizer.

10 (b) Any action the ~~state board~~ authorizer may take under this section
11 shall be based on the best interests of the public charter school's students,
12 the severity of the violation, and any previous violation the public charter
13 school may have committed.

14 (c) The ~~state board~~ authorizer shall adopt a procedure to be used for
15 placing a public charter school on probation or modifying, revoking, or
16 denying renewal of the school's charter.

17 (d)(1) The procedure adopted under this section shall provide an
18 opportunity for a hearing to the persons operating the public charter school.

19 (2)(A) The hearing shall be held at the ~~location of the regular~~
20 ~~or special meeting of the state board~~ Department of Education.

21 (B) The ~~state board~~ authorizer shall provide sufficient
22 written notice of the time and location of the hearing.

23 (3) There is no further right of appeal beyond the determination
24 of the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

25 (4) The Arkansas Administrative Procedure Act, § 25-15-201 et
26 seq., shall not apply to ~~any~~ a hearing concerning a public charter school.

27
28 6-23-106. Impact on school desegregation efforts.

29 (a) The applicants for a public charter school, the local school board
30 for the district in which a proposed public charter school would be located,
31 and the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer shall carefully review the
32 potential impact of an application for a public charter school on the efforts
33 of a public school district or public school districts to comply with court
34 orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of
35 desegregated public schools.

36 (b) The ~~state board~~ authorizer shall attempt to measure the likely

1 impact of a proposed public charter school on the efforts of public school
2 districts to achieve and maintain a unitary system.

3 (c) The ~~state board~~ authorizer shall not approve any public charter
4 school under this chapter or any other act or any combination of acts that
5 hampers, delays, or in any manner negatively affects the desegregation
6 efforts of a public school district or public school districts in this state.
7

8 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-23-201(a)(1), concerning an application
9 for a conversion public charter, is amended to read as follows:

10 (a)(1) Any public school district may apply to the ~~State Board of~~
11 ~~Education~~ authorizer for conversion public charter school status for a public
12 school in the public school district in accordance with a schedule approved
13 by the ~~state board~~ authorizer.
14

15 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-23-202 - 204 are amended to read as
16 follows:

17 6-23-202. Authorization for conversion public charter school status.

18 As requested by the conversion public charter school applicant, the
19 ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer shall review the application for
20 conversion public charter school status and may approve any application that:

21 (1) Provides a plan for improvement at the school level for
22 improving student learning and for meeting or exceeding the state education
23 goals;

24 (2) Includes a set of performance-based objectives and student
25 achievement objectives for the term of the charter and the means for
26 measuring those objectives on at least a yearly basis;

27 (3) Includes a proposal to directly and substantially involve
28 the parents of students to be enrolled in the conversion public charter
29 school, as well as the certified employees and the broader community, in the
30 process of carrying out the terms of the charter; and

31 (4) Includes an agreement to provide a yearly report to parents,
32 the community, the local school board, and the ~~state board~~ authorizer that
33 indicates the progress made by the conversion public charter school in
34 meeting the performance objectives during the previous year.
35

36 6-23-203. Resubmission of applications.

1 (a) The ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer may allow applicants to
2 resubmit applications for conversion public charter school status if the
3 original application was, in the opinion of the ~~state board~~ authorizer,
4 deficient in one (1) or more respects.

5 (b) The Department of Education may provide technical assistance to
6 the conversion public charter school applicants in the creation or
7 modification of these applications.

8
9 6-23-204. Charter renewal.

10 The ~~State Board of Education is authorized to~~ authorizer may renew
11 charters of conversion public charter schools on a one-year or multiyear
12 basis, not to exceed five (5) years, after the initial five-year period if
13 the renewal is approved by the local school board.

14
15 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-23-301(a)(1), concerning application
16 forms and procedures for open-enrollment public charter schools, is amended
17 to read as follows:

18 (a) The ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer shall adopt:

19 (1) An application form, a schedule, and a procedure that
20 must be used to apply for a charter for an open-enrollment public charter
21 school; and

22
23 SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-23-302(a) and (b), concerning an
24 application for an open-enrollment public charter school, is amended to read
25 as follows:

26 (a) Pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, an eligible entity may
27 apply to the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer to grant a charter for an
28 open-enrollment public charter school to operate in a facility of a
29 commercial or nonprofit entity or a public school district.

30 (b) The application to the ~~state board~~ authorizer for an open-
31 enrollment public charter school shall be made in accordance with a schedule
32 approved by the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

33
34 SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 6-23-302(c)(1), concerning an application
35 for an open-enrollment public charter, is amended to read as follows:

36 (1)(A) Describe the results of a public hearing called by the

1 applicant for the purpose of assessing support for an application for an
2 open-enrollment public charter school.

3 (B)(i) Notice of the public hearing shall be published one
4 (1) time a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper having general
5 circulation in the public school district in which the open-enrollment public
6 charter school is likely to be located.

7 (ii) The last publication of notice shall be no less
8 than seven (7) days ~~prior to~~ before the public meeting.

9 (iii) The notice shall not be published in the
10 classified or legal notice section of the newspaper.

11 (C)(i) Within seven (7) calendar days following the first
12 publication of notice required under subdivision (c)(1)(B) of this section,
13 letters announcing the public hearing shall be sent to the superintendent of
14 each of the public school districts from which the open-enrollment public
15 charter school is likely to draw students for the purpose of enrollment and
16 the superintendent of any public school district that is contiguous to the
17 public school district in which the open-enrollment public charter school
18 will be located.

19 (ii) An affected school district may submit written
20 comments concerning the application to the ~~state board~~ authorizer to be
21 considered at the time of the ~~state board's~~ authorizer's review of the
22 application;
23

24 SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 6-23-302(c)(5)(C), concerning an
25 application for an open-enrollment public charter school, is amended to read
26 as follows:

27 (C) If the facility that will be used for the open-
28 enrollment public charter school is owned by or leased from a sectarian
29 organization, the terms of the facility agreement must be disclosed to the
30 ~~state board~~ authorizer; and
31

32 SECTION 9. Arkansas Code § 6-23-302(d), concerning an application for
33 an open-enrollment public charter school, is amended to read as follows:

34 (d)(1)(A) The application may be reviewed and approved by the local
35 school board of the public school district in which the proposed open-
36 enrollment public charter school will operate.

1 (B) The applicant may submit to the ~~state board~~ authorizer
2 for expedited review an application approved by the local school board under
3 subdivision (d)(1)(A) of this section.

4 (2)(A) However, if the local school board disapproves the
5 application, the applicant shall have an immediate right to proceed with a
6 written notice of appeal to the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

7 (B) The ~~state board~~ authorizer shall hold a hearing within
8 forty-five (45) calendar days after receipt of the notice of appeal or a
9 request for review.

10 (C) All interested parties may appear at the hearing and
11 present relevant information regarding the application.

12
13 SECTION 10. Arkansas Code § 6-23-303 - 305 are amended to read as
14 follows:

15 6-23-303. Authorization for an open-enrollment public charter school.

16 As requested by the applicant for an open-enrollment public charter
17 school, the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer shall review the application
18 for an open-enrollment public charter school and may approve any application
19 that:

20 (1) Provides a plan for academic achievement that addresses how
21 the open-enrollment public charter school proposes to improve student
22 learning and meet the state education goals;

23 (2) Includes a set of performance criteria that will be used
24 during the initial five-year period of the open-enrollment public charter
25 school's operation to measure its progress in meeting its academic
26 performance goals;

27 (3) Includes a proposal to directly and substantially involve
28 the parents of students to be enrolled in the open-enrollment public charter
29 school, the certified employees, and the broader community in carrying out
30 the terms of the open-enrollment charter;

31 (4) Includes an agreement to provide an annual report to
32 parents, the community, and the ~~state board~~ authorizer that demonstrates the
33 progress made by the open-enrollment public charter school during the
34 previous academic year in meeting its academic performance objectives;

35 (5) Includes a detailed budget, a business plan, and a
36 governance plan for the operation of the open-enrollment public charter

1 school; and

2 (6) Establishes the eligible entity's status as a tax-exempt
3 organization under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 prior to
4 the first day of its operation with students.

5

6 6-23-304. Requirements – Preference for certain districts.

7 (a) The ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer may approve or deny an
8 application based on:

9 (1) Criteria provided by law or by rule adopted by the *state*
10 *board*;

11 (2) Findings of the ~~state board~~ authorizer relating to improving
12 student performance and encouraging innovative programs; and

13 (3) Written findings or statements received by the ~~state board~~
14 authorizer from any public school district likely to be affected by the open-
15 enrollment public charter school.

16 (b) The ~~state board~~ authorizer shall give preference in approving an
17 application for an open-enrollment public charter school to be located in any
18 public school district:

19 (1) When the percentage of students who qualify for free or
20 reduced-price lunches is above the average for the state;

21 (2) When the district has been classified by the state board as
22 in academic distress under § 6-15-428; or

23 (3) When the district has been classified by the Department of
24 Education as in some phase of school improvement status under § 6-15-426 or
25 some phase of fiscal distress under the Arkansas Fiscal Assessment and
26 Accountability Program, § 6-20-1901 et seq., if the fiscal distress status is
27 a result of administrative fiscal mismanagement, as determined by the state
28 board.

29 (c)(1)(A) ~~Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the state board~~
30 The department, the State Board of Education, or a combination of the
31 department and state board may grant no more than a total of twenty-four (24)
32 charters for open-enrollment public charter schools except as provided under
33 subdivision (c)(1)(B) of this section.

34 (B) If the cap on the number of charters available for an
35 open-enrollment public charter school is within two (2) charters of meeting
36 any existing limitation or cap on available open-enrollment charters, the

1 number of available charters shall automatically increase by five (5) slots
2 more than the most recent existing limitation or cap on open-enrollment
3 charters.

4 (C) By March 1 each year, the department shall issue a
5 commissioner's memo stating the existing limitation on the number of charters
6 available for open-enrollment public charter schools and the number of
7 charters available for open-enrollment public charter schools during the next
8 application cycle.

9 (2) An open-enrollment public charter applicant's school campus
10 shall be limited to a single open-enrollment public charter school per
11 charter except as allowed in subdivision (d)~~(3)~~ of this section.

12 (3) An open-enrollment public charter school shall not open in
13 the service area of a public school district administratively reorganized
14 under § 6-13-1601 et seq., until after the third year of the administrative
15 reorganization.

16 (4) A private or parochial elementary or secondary school shall
17 not be eligible for open-enrollment public charter school status.

18 (d) A charter applicant that receives an approved open-enrollment
19 public charter may petition the ~~state board~~ authorizer for additional
20 licenses to establish an open-enrollment public charter school in any of the
21 various congressional districts in Arkansas if the applicant meets the
22 following conditions:

23 (1) The approved open-enrollment public charter applicant has
24 demonstrated academic success ~~in student achievement gains~~, as defined by the
25 state board for all public schools;

26 (2) The approved open-enrollment public charter applicant has
27 not:

28 (A) Been subject to any disciplinary action by the ~~state~~
29 ~~board~~ authorizer;

30 (B) Been classified as in ~~school improvement or~~ academic
31 or fiscal distress; and

32 (C) Had its open-enrollment public charter placed on
33 charter school probation or suspended or revoked under § 6-23-105; and

34 (3) The ~~state board~~ authorizer determines in writing by majority
35 of a quorum ~~of the state board~~ present that the open-enrollment public
36 charter applicant has generally established the educational program results

1 and criteria set forth in this subsection.

2

3 6-23-305. Notice of disapproval – Assistance with resubmission of
4 application.

5 (a) If the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer disapproves an
6 application for an open-enrollment public charter school, the ~~state board~~
7 authorizer shall notify the applicant in writing of the reasons for such
8 disapproval.

9 (b) The ~~state board~~ authorizer may allow the applicant for an open-
10 enrollment public charter school to resubmit its application if the original
11 application was found to be deficient by the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

12 (c) The Department of Education may provide technical assistance to
13 the applicant for an open-enrollment public charter school in the creation or
14 modification of its application.

15

16 SECTION 11. Arkansas Code § 6-23-307 is amended to read as follows:

17 6-23-307. Renewal of charter.

18 After the initial five-year period of an open-enrollment public
19 charter, the ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer may renew the open-
20 enrollment public charter on a one-year or multiyear basis, not to exceed
21 twenty (20) years.

22

23 SECTION 12. Arkansas Code § 6-23-310 is amended to read as follows:

24 6-23-310. Status report.

25 The ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer shall report on the status of
26 the open-enrollment public charter school programs to the General Assembly
27 each biennium and to the House ~~Interim~~ Committee on Education and the Senate
28 ~~Interim~~ Committee on Education during the interim between regular sessions of
29 the General Assembly.

30

31 SECTION 13. Arkansas Code § 6-23-404(c), concerning evaluations of
32 open-enrollment public charter schools, is amended to read as follows:

33 (c) The ~~State Board of Education~~ authorizer may require the charter
34 holder to appear before the ~~state board~~ authorizer to discuss the results of
35 the evaluation and to present further information to the ~~state board~~
36 authorizer as the ~~department or the state board~~ authorizer deems necessary.

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SECTION 14. Arkansas Code § 6-23-406(2), concerning a Department of Education review, is amended to read as follows:

(2) Report to the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education on the open-enrollment public charter school's:

(A) Overall financial condition; and

(B) Overall condition of student enrollment.

SECTION 15. Arkansas Code § 6-23-505 is amended to read as follows:
6-23-505. Annual audit.

An open-enrollment public charter school shall prepare an annual certified audit of the financial condition and transactions of the open-enrollment public charter school as of June 30 of each year in accordance with generally accepted auditing procedures and containing any other data as determined by the State Board of Education for all public schools.

SECTION 16. Arkansas Code § 6-23-506(b)(1), concerning assets of a school, is amended to read as follows:

(b)(1) If the open-enrollment public charter school used state funds to purchase or finance personal property, real property, or fixtures for use by the open-enrollment public charter school, the ~~State Board of Education~~ Department of Education may require that the property be sold.

SECTION 17. Arkansas Code § 6-23-601 is amended to read as follows:
6-23-601. Application for limited public charter school status – Approval – Teacher transfers – Annual evaluation.

(a)(1) Any public school may apply to the ~~State Board of Education~~ Department of Education for limited public charter school status for alternative comprehensive staffing and compensation programs designed to enhance student and teacher performance and improve employee salaries, opportunities, and incentives, to be known as a limited public charter school.

(2) A limited public charter shall be for the purpose of instituting alternative staffing practices in accordance with a schedule approved by the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

(3) A limited public charter shall be initially established for

1 a period of no more than five (5) years and may be renewed on a one-year or
2 multiyear basis, not to exceed five (5) years per charter renewal.

3 (b) The application shall:

4 (1)(A) Contain the provisions of this title and the specific
5 rules and regulations promulgated by the state board from which the limited
6 public charter school will be exempt.

7 (B) The provisions from which the public school district
8 may be exempt for the limited public charter school only shall be limited to
9 the following:

10 (i) The duty-free lunch period requirements set
11 forth in § 6-17-111;

12 (ii) The daily planning period requirements set
13 forth in § 6-17-114;

14 (iii) The committee on personnel policies
15 requirements set forth in § 6-17-201 et seq.; and

16 (iv) Standards for accreditation set forth in the
17 Arkansas Code, set forth by the Department of Education, or set forth by the
18 ~~state board~~ State Board of Education.

19 (C) No limited public charter school may be allowed an
20 exemption that would allow a full-time certified employee to be paid less
21 than the salary provided in the public school district's salary schedule for
22 that employee;

23 (2) Describe a plan for school improvement that addresses how
24 the limited public charter school will improve student learning and meet the
25 state education goals;

26 (3) Describe how the certified employees at the limited public
27 charter school will be involved in developing and implementing the school
28 improvement plan set forth in subdivision (b)(2) of this section and in
29 identifying performance criteria;

30 (4) Outline proposed performance criteria that will be used
31 during the initial five-year period of the charter to measure the progress of
32 the limited public charter school in improving student learning and meeting
33 or exceeding the state education goals; and

34 (5) Be reviewed as a regular agenda item and approved after
35 sufficient public comment by the local school board and the ~~state board~~
36 authorizer.

1 (c)(1) Any application to obtain limited public charter school status
2 approved by a local school board shall be forwarded by the local school board
3 to the ~~state board~~ authorizer.

4 (2) If a local school board does not approve a public school's
5 application, the local school board shall inform the applicants and faculty
6 of the public school of the local school board's reasons for not approving
7 the application.

8 (d)(1) A certified teacher employed by a public school in the school
9 year immediately preceding the effective date of a limited public charter for
10 a limited public charter school within that public school district may not be
11 transferred to or be employed by the limited public charter school over the
12 certified teacher's objections, nor shall that objection be used as a basis
13 to deny continuing employment within the public school district in another
14 public school at a similar grade level.

15 (2) If the transfer of a teacher within a public school district
16 is not possible because only one (1) public school exists for the teacher's
17 certification level, then the local school board shall call for a vote of the
18 certified teachers in the proposed limited public charter school site and
19 proceed, at the local school board's option, with the limited public charter
20 school application if a majority of the certified teachers approve the
21 proposal.

22 (3)(A) A certified teacher choosing to join the staff of a
23 limited public charter school shall be employed by the district by a written
24 contract as set forth in § ~~6-13-620(4)~~ 6-13-620(5), with the contract being
25 subject to the provisions of The Teacher Fair Dismissal Act of 1983, § 6-17-
26 1501 et seq.

27 (B)(i) The certified teacher shall also enter into a
28 separate supplemental contract specifically for the teacher's employment in
29 the limited public charter school, with the supplemental contract being
30 exempt from The Teacher Fair Dismissal Act of 1983, § 6-17-1501 et seq., and
31 from § 6-17-807.

32 (ii) Termination of the supplemental contract shall
33 not be used as a basis to deny continued employment of the teacher within the
34 public school district in another public school at a similar grade level.

35 (e)(1) Limited public charter schools shall be evaluated annually by
36 the department based on criteria approved by the ~~state board~~ authorizer

1 including without limitation:

2 (A) Student performance data in order to determine
3 progress in student achievement that has been achieved by the limited public
4 charter school; and

5 (B) The limited public charter school's compliance with §
6 6-23-107.

7 (2) The department shall annually report its evaluation to the
8 state board and the Commissioner of Education.

9 (3) Based upon that evaluation, the ~~state board~~ authorizer may
10 revoke a limited public charter.

11 (f) The state board shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary
12 for the implementation of this subchapter.

13

14 SECTION 18. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 23, is amended to add an
15 additional subchapter to read as follows:

16 Subchapter 7 – Public Charter School Authorizer

17

18 6-23-701. Designated public charter authorizer.

19 (a) The Department of Education is the designated public charter
20 authorizer with jurisdiction and authority over all public charters issued in
21 this state to take the following action on a proposed or established public
22 charter:

23 (1) Approve;

24 (2) Reject;

25 (3) Renew;

26 (4) Non-renew;

27 (5) Place on probation;

28 (6) Modify;

29 (7) Revoke; or

30 (8) Deny.

31 (b)(1) The department shall exercise authority over public charter
32 schools under this chapter through a public charter authorizing panel
33 established within the department.

34 (2)(A) The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a public
35 charter authorizing panel that consists of professional staff employed at the
36 department to serve at the pleasure of the commissioner.

1 (B) The commissioner may elect to serve as a member on the
2 charter authorizing panel as the chair.

3 (3) The public charter authorizing panel is composed of an odd
4 number of members and consists of no less than five (5) members and no more
5 than eleven (11) members.

6 (c) The department may waive provisions of Title 6 or State Board of
7 Education rules as allowed by law for public charters.

8 (d)(1) The department shall conduct all hearings on public charter
9 school matters as required by law, rule, and process and make final
10 determinations as allowed by law.

11 (2)(A) A hearing under this chapter conducted by the department
12 shall be an open meeting under the Freedom of Information Act of 1967, § 25-
13 19-106.

14 (B) For the purposes of § 25-19-106, the members of the
15 public charter authorizing panel shall be considered a governing body only in
16 regards to actions specifically authorized by this subchapter.

17 (3)(A) All decisions of the panel shall be made by majority vote
18 of the quorum.

19 (B) A decision of the department is final except as
20 provided under § 6-23-703.

21 (4) The Arkansas Administrative Procedure Act, § 25-15-201 et
22 seq. shall not apply to a hearing concerning a public charter school.

23 (e) The department shall be the primary authorizer of public charters
24 except as provided under § 6-23-703.

25
26 6-23-702. Public charter authorizing procedures – Notification.

27 (a) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules as necessary to
28 administer this subchapter, including without limitation the procedure for:

29 (1) Hearings; and

30 (2) Administration of the public charter authorizing panel.

31 (b)(1) The department shall notify in writing the State Board of
32 Education, charter applicant, public charter school, and affected schools
33 districts, if any, of final decisions made by the department no less than
34 fourteen (14) calendar days before the next regularly scheduled State Board
35 of Education meeting after the final decision is made by the department.

36 (2)(A) A charter applicant, public charter school, and affected

1 school district, if any, may submit in writing a request that the state board
2 review the final decision of the department under § 6-23-703.

3 (B) The written request submitted under subdivision
4 (b)(2)(A) of this section shall state the specific reasons supporting a
5 review by the state board.

6 (3) The decision of whether to review a final decision of the
7 department is discretionary by the state board and the provisions of this
8 section and § 6-23-703 do not grant any right of appeal to a charter
9 applicant, public charter school, or affected school district.

10
11 6-23-703. State Board of Education optional review.

12 (a) On a motion approved by a majority vote, the State Board of
13 Education may exercise a right of review of a charter determination made by
14 the Department of Education at the next regularly scheduled state board
15 meeting after receiving notice provided under § 6-23-702(b).

16 (b) If the state board votes to review a final decision made by the
17 department, the state board shall:

18 (1) State the specific additional information the state board
19 requires from the department, public charter school, public charter school
20 applicant, or affected school district;

21 (2) Conduct a full hearing regarding a final decision by the
22 department under § 6-23-701(a); and

23 (3) Hold the hearing at the earlier of:

24 (A) The next regularly scheduled state board meeting
25 following the state board meeting during which the state board voted to
26 authorize a review; or

27 (B) A special board meeting called by the state board.

28 (c)(1) At the conclusion of the hearing, the state board may issue a
29 final decision by state board vote.

30 (2) The state board may decide by majority vote of the quorum
31 to:

32 (A) Affirm the decision of the department;

33 (B) Take other lawful action on the public charter;

34 (C)(i) Request additional information from the department,
35 public charter school, public charter school applicant, or affected school
36 district, if needed.

1 (ii) If the state board request additional
2 information under subdivision (c)(2)(C)(i) of this section, the state board
3 shall hold a subsequent hearing at the earlier of:

4 (a) The next regularly scheduled state board
5 meeting; or

6 (b) A special board meeting called by the
7 state board.

8 (3) A decision made by the state board is final with no right of
9 appeal.

10 (d) The state board may promulgate rules as necessary to implement
11 this section.

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