



June 11, 2019

Dr. Cassandra E. Ulbrich
President, State Board of Education
608 W. Allegan St.
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear President Ulbrich and Members of the State Board:

On behalf of the members of the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers (“Council”), I am writing to address some comments made about the role of authorizing bodies in the public charter school community in general, and with regards to administration of the Federal Charter School Program (“CSP”) grant specifically. Together we authorize 82% of all public charter schools in Michigan, and collectively the public schools we charter educate more than 130,000 Michigan students.

Attached is a fact sheet about Michigan’s authorizers. You’ll note that:

- Our most important job is ensuring that the students served by the schools we authorize are receiving a quality education. We do this not only through the educational goals in the charter contract, but also through an array of supports and resources to assist schools in providing an environment that results in improved academic performance.
- Because great academic performance is predicated on each public school we charter being a healthy organization, we oversee compliance with applicable law and the charter contract to ensure that each school is operating transparently and with integrity. This includes the vetting of each proposed school board member and continuing to support them while in office; attending hundreds of charter board meetings each year; and reviewing thousands of legally required submissions to ensure they are on-time, accurate, and complete.
- We are also charged with making high-stakes decisions, including which proposals will receive charters and whether and for how long a charter contract will be renewed at its end. These decisions are made through increasingly sophisticated processes that are informed by quantitative and qualitative data, as well as our professional judgement.

We work collaboratively with the Michigan Department of Education (“MDE”) in what we do. Since both MDE and authorizing bodies share the important task of overseeing public charter schools’ compliance and performance, our goal has been to work together as partners. Our relationship is one of mutual trust and respect.

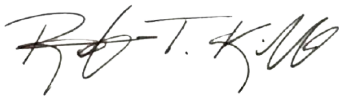
One area of partnership has been with the administration of the CSP grant. Working together, we are ensuring that grant funds are well-stewarded. The charter application process and the grant application process are aligned, ensuring that grant applicants simply can't receive a grant without also receiving a charter. Our respective offices also provide an assurance, based on our oversight systems and best professional judgement, that the applicant either currently meets or will meet in a short period of time the criteria for being a high-performing school.

Also, we are working in partnership on other activities under the grant to help increase school board members' capacity to govern, address concerns surrounding school closures, and promote greater commonality around how we as authorizers approach the core of what we do.

Lastly, please do know that my recent invitation to participate in a Council meeting still stands. We would value the opportunity to have a conversation about what we do to oversee and support the schools we charter and how we work with MDE to exercise our shared oversight responsibilities.

I do hope that you can join us soon.

With Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. T. Kimball". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Robert T. Kimball, Ed.D.
Chairman, Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers