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October 31, 2016

Deanna Townsend-Smith Ed.D.  
Lead Education Consultant  
NCDPI Office of Charter Schools  
6303 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-6303

Dear Dr. Townsend-Smith:

We welcome the opportunity to respond through this impact statement on yet another application request for a charter school in our district. As educators, we want the children of this county to have access to quality educational services they need.

The most significant impact to us is obviously financial. When there is a negative financial impact, it is imperative to have proper planning time and tools. Currently, there is no good way to project ADM for Charters and their respective LEA's. As a result, the uncertainty of the funding has LEA's making financial decisions long past the start of the school year. The wide swings in projections can require complete reorganization of classes in a school midyear. This is quite detrimental for both students and teachers.

The current structure for state and local funding for charters and resulting impact on LEA's needs to be revisited without further delay. Currently, LEA's rely heavily on DPI projections to balance their budget. With the influx of charter schools, DPI projections are unreliable. Charter schools are unwilling/unable to provide accurate projections for their enrollment. The current structure was set up in a time when there was a cap on charter schools and was reasonable. Now that the cap has been removed, the structure no longer works and we are suffering because of it.

Charters are unable to bill LEA's accurately. LEA staff spends a significant amount of time verifying student addresses and requesting changes to the Charter school invoices. The charter schools don't generally bill until late. Once they bill, it is inevitably inaccurate. Once reconciled and ready to pay, we find ourselves already in the month of November. Some LEA's are forced to go back to their commissioners and request additional funds just so they pay their bills.

LEA's are required to present a budget to their commissioners and are required to pass those funds onto Charters. LEA's justify and are held accountable for the funds they receive. If Charters are to receive their appropriate share of local funding, they should also be required to justify their expense. They should also be held accountable in the same manner as LEA's.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Lowder', written over a horizontal line.

Christopher M. Lowder, Ed.D.  
Superintendent