

For Immediate Release: *June 22, 2011*

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce today approved the second in a series of education reform bills designed to overhaul current elementary and secondary education law. The Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act (H.R. 2218), sponsored by Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Chairman Duncan Hunter, passed by a strong bipartisan vote of 34 to 5.

Rep. Hunter said, “This legislation will open the doors of opportunity for parents and children across the country. By encouraging the development and expansion of more high-quality charter schools, not only will we offer fresh hope to the more than 400,000 students currently on charter school waitlists, we will also take a great step toward building a stronger, more successful education system. I look forward to House passage of H.R. 2218.”

“I am pleased both sides of the committee have come together to support the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act,” said Chairman John Kline (R-MN). “Decisions about how to keep children learning and engaged in the classroom should largely be left to the parents, teachers, and school officials who are on the ground, interacting with children and the community on a daily basis. Rep. Hunter’s legislation will help get the federal government out of the way of local innovation and pave the way for a more challenging, rewarding classroom experience in communities nationwide. I applaud all my committee colleagues for their diligent and collaborative work on this legislation.”

H.R. 2218 will modernize and streamline the federal Charter School Program, and provide

greater opportunities for states to support the development and expansion of successful charter schools. Additionally, the legislation will enhance how policymakers measure the impact of the Charter School Program, ensuring taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

Several Republican committee members issued statements praising the legislation's approval:

Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA):

"Many students get trapped in failing schools and need a way out; public charter schools serve as a consistently high-quality alternative. Parents are best equipped to make decisions for their children, including the educational setting that will best serve the interests and educational needs of their child. H.R. 2218 will allow parents more options and opportunities to make sure their child receives the best education possible."

Rep. Thomas Petri (R-WI):

"Charter schools play a critical role in K-12 education by spurring innovation and providing more options for parents. I am pleased to support legislation to build on that success by improving the quality of existing charter schools and facilitating the expansion of more of these unique institutions."

Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN):

"I am delighted that H.R. 2218, the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act, passed through committee today with bipartisan support because a first-rate education is critical for our children's future. The best educational system is one in which parents, teachers, and local school boards collaborate to set the agenda - not bureaucrats in Washington. This legislation spurs excellence in education by encouraging both innovation in our classrooms and the establishment of high-quality charter schools."

Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-TN):

"Removing impediments to charter school creation is a key component in improving our nation's public school system. Charter schools empower parents to play a more active role in their child's education while allowing teachers to develop innovative teaching methods. Additionally, these schools can provide students an escape from underperforming public schools. We need to continue to support high quality educational institutions that will help our students be successful in the classroom."

Rep. Larry Bucshon (R-IN):

“I am proud to cosponsor legislation to substantially increase parental choice and make a quality education accessible to all children. H.R. 2218, the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act, is an important step in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and will encourage the establishment of more high-quality charter schools while promoting choice, innovation, and excellence in education.”

Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC):

“As a strong proponent of school choice, I know H.R. 2218 will help students and parents have a better future by supporting the creation and expansion of more high-quality charter schools across the country. I am pleased this legislation was approved by the committee and look forward to continuing our efforts to improve education for America’s children.

Rep. Mike Kelly (R-PA):

“Charter schools play an important role in our nation’s education system. These unique institutions meet parental demands for more choice and greater involvement in their children’s education, as well as allowing teachers to pioneer and implement new methods of teaching that have raised the standard of learning in communities throughout the country. The Empowering Parents through Quality Charter School Act builds on that success to ensure that more students can benefit from a charter school education.”