



STATE OF MAINE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
1 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage

GOVERNOR

June 11, 2012

Mr. James Banks  
Chairman, Maine State Charter School Commission  
33 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Mr. Banks:

I am writing to express concern over the State Charter School Commission's recent decision to table consideration of virtual charter schools for another year. If any members of the Commission are not up to meeting the State's expectations, I urge their resignation.

While I agree that new charter schools should be subjected to the serious review process, I believe more than adequate time exists for a thorough review while still ensuring that Maine students benefit from educational options as quickly as possible. The statute under which you are operating became effective on September 28, 2011 and the Commission has been in place for more than half a year already. My understanding is that the Commission has developed a thorough review process and has the option of bringing in experts to help vet these applications, so I fail to see what further resources the Commission needs at this time to complete its work.

Charter schools are not a new concept. Nor is approval of charter schools a novel process. Maine is the 41<sup>st</sup> state in the nation to allow charter schools. Good and bad models exist of charter schools with decades of data to guide the Commission's efforts.

Maine faces complex problems in reforming its educational systems. Too many students are stuck in failing schools without viable choices. Over one hundred and ten Maine schools rank at less than fifty percent of students meeting or exceeding standards in math and reading. Students struggling to learn in these environments deserve an opportunity to succeed that the local community and the State are clearly failing to provide. Your Commission's consideration, and hopefully approval, of a selection of charter schools, including virtual schools, offers a potential lifeline for many of these students.

Virtual learning is utilized by charter schools in other states, by homeschoolers here in Maine, by the University of Maine System, and other institutes of learning in the State. Indeed, I spoke about this topic just Saturday with the President of Kaplan University, which uses virtual learning extensively. If additional expertises are required for your consideration of these



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applications, the Department of Education has extensive expertise in the use of technology in education. Additionally, I would be happy to facilitate additional communications with higher education experts. The bottom line is the schools deserve, no our students deserve, prompt consideration of every viable option for education available.

I urge the Commission to reconsider its decision to table virtual charter school applications, and ask that you give full consideration to all viable charter school applications. Your work is critical to many students, so I strongly encourage you to complete your work promptly.

I have no doubt that countless Maine people would be glad to have the opportunity to take a seat on the Commission in order to pursue new and innovative educational options for our students.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul R. LePage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P".

Paul R. LePage

Governor

CC: Commission members  
Maine School Management Association  
Maine Education Association