



**Cornville Regional Charter School**  
Early Childhood Campus - Cornville Campus - Downtown Skowhegan Campus

**"Community Centered, Uncompromising Learner Focused"**

April 8, 2019

Dear Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Travis Works the Executive Director of Cornville Regional Charter School and I would like to testify in opposition to LD 307 An Act To Limit the Number of Charter Schools in Maine.

I encourage the committee to zoom out to the 30,000 foot view and look at what maintaining the cap actually does. It removes choice from parents and more importantly from learners. We were the first public charter school in Maine and we reached our maximum enrollment for the original program 2 years ago. Families were very fortunate that we expanded two other programs (Pre-K Level and Middle/High School Level). Once a school hits its maximum learner population, then the only spots that open up are ones where learners leave or age out of the program. This means that it automatically restricts choice for future learners. Now we are not here to discuss or decide about raising enrollment on individual schools but rather the question today is, as the 10 Charter School spots become full, what will the impact on parents and learners be across the State of Maine? As each of those 10 schools mature and reach maximum capacity, unless you were one of the fortunate families to enroll early, your chances to enroll in another free public education program becomes a lot more difficult.

Charter Schools on the National Level are accused of recruiting the "cream of the crop", the wealthiest, and learners that are not identified as needing services. In Maine, we are different and unique and we do not fit that trend. At Cornville Regional Charter School we have 80% economically disadvantaged, 30% identified as needing Special Education services, which is double the State average, and we enroll a large population that was previously homeschooled.

Eliminating a free choice from parents makes Maine Charter Schools even more exclusive. It will reward those that enrolled early and those future families will be limited to only the school in their zip code, homeschooling, or become a drop out. The reality is that, unless a parent has the resources and money they have a limited amount of choices.

Unfortunately, due to the weather today, a group of our learners could not be here today and we will be submitting their written testimonies. One of the learners, a freshman, said that our school was a "fresh start" for him and that he is grateful for the opportunity that he was afforded this year. I don't want us to focus on why he needed a fresh start, as much as the fact that he had an opportunity to do so. If his family had the income, he could have sought out a private school, but instead, he had a choice to attend our school at no cost. With 80% of our population below the poverty level it is very clear that school choice does in fact level the playing field for families of all income levels.

Not every school is perfect for every learner or family, which is why school choice is important. Giving families and learners a choice that doesn't cost money or put up barriers is critical to insure that every family has access and choice to a public education that meets their needs, social/emotionally and academically.

In the Service of Learners,

Travis Works  
Executive Director