



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

A. PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

April 8, 2019

Senator Rebecca Millett, Co-chair
Representative Tori Kornfield, Co-chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Dear Senator Rebecca Millett, Representative Kornfield and Members of the Joint Committee,

LD 307 - *An Act To Limit the Number of Charter Schools in Maine*, would make permanent the number of charter schools that may operate in Maine. At this time, the Department does not take a position either for or against LD 307, but offers the following information as the Committee considers this bill.

The Maine Legislature authorized the establishment of public charter schools in 2011. Since that time, the Maine Charter School Commission has authorized 9 charter schools, which currently operate in Maine; statute allows that only 10 charter schools may be authorized by the Commission during a 10-year transition period (2011 – 2021). The Commission has carefully reviewed and approved the applications for existing charter schools and it continues to review the schools annually. Furthermore, the Commission reviews extensive reports from the schools before re-authorizing any school's charter.

While the Commission has comprehensive data on the 9 charter schools and works diligently to measure the performance of approved schools along 10 dimensions that include academic growth and achievement of the students, adequacy of facilities, food service, and transportation, and financial management and governance, questions remain about the overall relationship between the existence of public charter schools in Maine and traditional public schools. The Department recommends that an independent evaluation of Maine's system of public charter schools be conducted during these last two years of the 10-year transition period and that this review comprehensively address how charter schools may affect the broader education system.

Members of the Department are happy to attend the work session on LD 307.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Karen Kusiak'.

Karen Kusiak, Ed.D.

Reference

Department of Education, (2018, May). *Report on Maine Public Charter School Program*.