

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 59th Legislature (2023)

SENATE BILL 149

By: Hicks

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to charter schools; amending 70 O.S. 2021, Section 3-132, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 222, O.S.L. 2022 (70 O.S. Supp. 2022, Section 3-132), which relates to charter school sponsorship; removing language allowing the State Board of Education to sponsor a charter school under certain circumstances; prohibiting the State Board of Education from sponsoring certain charter schools after certain date; requiring certain notification; directing certain charter school applicants to enter into certain contract by certain date; providing for dissolution of certain charter schools after certain date; updating statutory reference and language; amending 70 O.S. 2021, Section 3-134, as amended by Section 2, Chapter 222, O.S.L. 2022 (70 O.S. Supp. 2022, Section 3-134), which relates to charter school applications; removing language regarding the location of certain charter school sponsored by the State Board of Education; modifying which charter school applicants can seek certain arbitration under certain conditions; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2021, Section 3-132, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 222, O.S.L. 2022 (70 O.S. Supp. 2022, Section 3-132), is amended to read as follows:

1 Section 3-132. A. The Oklahoma Charter Schools Act shall apply
2 only to charter schools formed and operated under the provisions of
3 ~~the act~~ Section 3-130 et seq. of this title. Charter schools shall
4 be sponsored only as follows:

5 1. By any school district located in ~~the State of Oklahoma~~ this
6 state, provided such charter school shall only be located within the
7 geographical boundaries of the sponsoring district and subject to
8 the restrictions of Section 3-145.6 of this title;

9 2. By a technology center school district if the charter school
10 is located in a school district served by the technology center
11 school district in which all or part of the school district is
12 located in a county having more than five hundred thousand (500,000)
13 population according to the latest Federal Decennial Census;

14 3. By a technology center school district if the charter school
15 is located in a school district served by the technology center
16 school district and the school district has a school site that has
17 been identified as in need of improvement by the State Board of
18 Education pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
19 1965, as amended or reauthorized;

20 4. By an accredited comprehensive or regional institution that
21 is a member of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education or a
22 community college if the charter school is located in a school
23 district in which all or part of the school district is located in a
24

1 county having more than five hundred thousand (500,000) population
2 according to the latest Federal Decennial Census;

3 5. By a comprehensive or regional institution that is a member
4 of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education if the charter
5 school is located in a school district that has a school site that
6 has been identified as in need of improvement by the State Board of
7 Education pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
8 1965, as amended or reauthorized. In addition, the institution
9 shall have a teacher education program accredited by the Oklahoma
10 Commission for Teacher Preparation and have a branch campus or
11 constituent agency physically located within the school district in
12 which the charter school is located in ~~the State of Oklahoma~~ this
13 state;

14 6. By a federally recognized Indian tribe, operating a high
15 school under the authority of the Bureau of Indian Affairs as of
16 November 1, 2010, if the charter school is for the purpose of
17 demonstrating native language immersion instruction, and is located
18 within its former reservation or treaty area boundaries. For
19 purposes of this paragraph, native language immersion instruction
20 shall require that educational instruction and other activities
21 conducted at the school site are primarily conducted in the native
22 language;

23 7. By the State Board of Education when the applicant of the
24 charter school is the Office of Juvenile Affairs or the applicant

1 has a contract with the Office of Juvenile Affairs and the charter
2 school is for the purpose of providing education services to youth
3 in the custody or supervision of the state. Not more than two
4 charter schools shall be sponsored by the Board as provided for in
5 this paragraph during the period of time beginning July 1, 2010,
6 through July 1, 2016; or

7 8. By a federally recognized Indian tribe only when the charter
8 school is located within the former reservation or treaty area
9 boundaries of the tribe on property held in trust by the Bureau of
10 Indian Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior for
11 the benefit of the tribe; ~~or~~

12 ~~9. By the State Board of Education when the applicant has first~~
13 ~~been denied a charter by the local school district in which it seeks~~
14 ~~to operate. In counties with fewer than five hundred thousand~~
15 ~~(500,000) population, according to the latest Federal Decennial~~
16 ~~Census, the State Board of Education shall not sponsor more than~~
17 ~~five charter schools per year each year for the first five (5) years~~
18 ~~after the effective date of this act, with not more than one charter~~
19 ~~school sponsored in a single school district per year. In order to~~
20 ~~authorize a charter school under this section, the State Board of~~
21 ~~Education shall find evidence of all of the following:~~

- 22 a. ~~a thorough and high-quality charter school application~~
23 ~~from the applicant based on the authorizing standards~~
24 ~~in subsection B of Section 3-134 of this title,~~

1 ~~b. a clear demonstration of community support for the~~
2 ~~charter school, and~~

3 ~~e. the grounds and basis of objection by the school~~
4 ~~district for denying the operation of the charter are~~
5 ~~not supported by the greater weight of evidence and~~
6 ~~the strength of the application.~~

7 B. An eligible non-school-district sponsor shall give priority
8 to opening charter schools that serve at-risk student populations or
9 students from low-performing traditional public schools.

10 C. An eligible non-school-district sponsor shall give priority
11 to applicants that have demonstrated a record of operating at least
12 one school or similar program that demonstrates academic success and
13 organizational viability and serves student populations similar to
14 those the proposed charter school seeks to serve. In assessing the
15 potential for quality replication of a charter school, a sponsor
16 shall consider the following factors before approving a new site or
17 school:

18 1. Evidence of a strong and reliable record of academic success
19 based primarily on student performance data, as well as other viable
20 indicators, including financial and operational success;

21 2. A sound, detailed, and well-supported growth plan;

22 3. Evidence of the ability to transfer successful practices to
23 a potentially different context that includes reproducing critical
24 cultural, organizational and instructional characteristics;

1 4. Any management organization involved in a potential
2 replication is fully vetted, and the academic, financial, and
3 operational records of the schools it operates are found to be
4 satisfactory;

5 5. Evidence the program seeking to be replicated has the
6 capacity to do so successfully without diminishing or putting at
7 risk its current operations; and

8 6. A financial structure that ensures that funds attributable
9 to each charter school within a network and required by law to be
10 utilized by a school remain with and are used to benefit that
11 school.

12 D. For purposes of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act, "charter
13 school" means a public school established by contract with a board
14 of education of a school district, an area vocational-technical
15 school district, a higher education institution, a federally
16 recognized Indian tribe, or the State Board of Education pursuant to
17 the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act to provide learning that will
18 improve student achievement and as defined in the Elementary and
19 Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 8065.

20 E. 1. For the purposes of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act,
21 "conversion school" means a school created by converting all or any
22 part of a traditional public school in order to access any or all
23 flexibilities afforded to a charter school.

1 2. Prior to the board of education of a school district
2 converting all or any part of a traditional public school to a
3 conversion school, the board shall prepare a conversion plan. The
4 conversion plan shall include documentation that demonstrates and
5 complies with paragraphs 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17,
6 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 34, and 35 of subsection B of Section 3-134
7 of this title. The conversion plan and all documents shall be in
8 writing and shall be available to the public pursuant to the
9 requirements of the Oklahoma Open Records Act. All votes by the
10 board of education of a school district to approve a conversion plan
11 shall be held in an open public session. If the board of education
12 of a school district votes to approve a conversion plan, the board
13 shall notify the State Board of Education within sixty (60) days
14 after the vote. The notification shall include a copy of the
15 minutes for the board meeting at which the conversion plan was
16 approved.

17 3. A conversion school shall comply with all the same
18 accountability measures as are required of a charter school as
19 defined in subsection D of this section. The provisions of Sections
20 3-140 and 3-142 of this title shall not apply to a conversion
21 school. Conversion schools shall comply with the same laws and
22 State Board of Education rules relating to student enrollment which
23 apply to traditional public schools. Conversion schools shall be
24 funded by the board of education of the school district as a school

1 site within the school district and funding shall not be affected by
2 the conversion of the school.

3 4. The board of education of a school district may vote to
4 revert a conversion school back to a traditional public school at
5 any time; provided, the change shall only occur during a break
6 between school years.

7 5. Unless otherwise provided for in this subsection, a
8 conversion school shall retain the characteristics of a traditional
9 public school.

10 F. A charter school may consist of a new school site, new
11 school sites or all or any portion of an existing school site. An
12 entire school district may not become a charter school site.

13 G. 1. Beginning July 1, 2024, the State Board of Education
14 shall not sponsor charter schools except as provided for in
15 paragraph 7 of subsection A of this section.

16 2. On the effective date of this act, the State Board of
17 Education shall notify any charter school that is sponsored by the
18 Board in a manner other than that allowed by paragraph 7 of
19 subsection A of this section that its sponsorship shall cease
20 effective July 1, 2024. The charter school applicant shall have
21 until July 1, 2024, to enter into a contract with a sponsor as
22 provided for in subsection A of this section. If the charter school
23 applicant does not successfully enter into a contract with a sponsor
24 by July 1, 2024, the charter school shall be dissolved.

1 SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2021, Section 3-134, as
2 amended by Section 2, Chapter 222, O.S.L. 2022 (70 O.S. Supp. 2022,
3 Section 3-134), is amended to read as follows:

4 Section 3-134. A. For written applications filed after January
5 1, 2008, prior to submission of the application to a proposed
6 sponsor seeking to establish a charter school, the applicant shall
7 be required to complete training which shall not exceed ten (10)
8 hours provided by the State Department of Education on the process
9 and requirements for establishing a charter school. The Department
10 shall develop and implement the training by January 1, 2008. The
11 Department may provide the training in any format and manner that
12 the Department determines to be efficient and effective including,
13 but not limited to, web-based training.

14 B. Except as otherwise provided for in Section 3-137 of this
15 title, an applicant seeking to establish a charter school shall
16 submit a written application to the proposed sponsor as prescribed
17 in subsection E of this section. The application shall include:

- 18 1. A mission statement for the charter school;
- 19 2. A description including, but not limited to, background
20 information of the organizational structure and the governing body
21 of the charter school;
- 22 3. A financial plan for the first five (5) years of operation
23 of the charter school and a description of the treasurer or other
24 officers or persons who shall have primary responsibility for the

1 finances of the charter school. Such person shall have demonstrated
2 experience in school finance or the equivalent thereof;

3 4. A description of the hiring policy of the charter school;

4 5. The name of the applicant or applicants and requested
5 sponsor;

6 6. A description of the facility and location of the charter
7 school;

8 7. A description of the grades being served;

9 8. An outline of criteria designed to measure the effectiveness
10 of the charter school;

11 9. A demonstration of support for the charter school from
12 residents of the school district which may include but is not
13 limited to a survey of the school district residents or a petition
14 signed by residents of the school district;

15 10. Documentation that the applicants completed charter school
16 training as set forth in subsection A of this section;

17 11. A description of the minimum and maximum enrollment planned
18 per year for each term of the charter contract;

19 12. The proposed calendar for the charter school and sample
20 daily schedule;

21 13. Unless otherwise authorized by law or regulation, a
22 description of the academic program aligned with state standards;

1 14. A description of the instructional design of the charter
2 school, including the type of learning environment, class size and
3 structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods;

4 15. The plan for using internal and external assessments to
5 measure and report student progress on the performance framework
6 developed by the applicant in accordance with subsection C of
7 Section 3-135 of this title;

8 16. The plans for identifying and successfully serving students
9 with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and
10 students who are academically behind;

11 17. A description of cocurricular or extracurricular programs
12 and how they will be funded and delivered;

13 18. Plans and time lines for student recruitment and
14 enrollment, including lottery procedures;

15 19. The student discipline policies for the charter school,
16 including those for special education students;

17 20. An organizational chart that clearly presents the
18 organizational structure of the charter school, including lines of
19 authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, any
20 related bodies such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher
21 councils, and any external organizations that will play a role in
22 managing the school;

23 21. A clear description of the roles and responsibilities for
24 the governing board, the leadership and management team for the

1 charter school, and any other entities shown in the organizational
2 chart;

3 22. The leadership and teacher employment policies for the
4 charter school;

5 23. Proposed governing bylaws;

6 24. Explanations of any partnerships or contractual
7 partnerships central to the operations or mission of the charter
8 school;

9 25. The plans for providing transportation, food service, and
10 all other significant operational or ancillary services;

11 26. Opportunities and expectations for parental involvement;

12 27. A detailed school start-up plan that identifies tasks, time
13 lines, and responsible individuals;

14 28. A description of the financial plan and policies for the
15 charter school, including financial controls and audit requirements;

16 29. A description of the insurance coverage the charter school
17 will obtain;

18 30. Start-up and five-year budgets with clearly stated
19 assumptions;

20 31. Start-up and first-year cash-flow projections with clearly
21 stated assumptions;

22 32. Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions, if
23 claimed in the application;

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1 33. A sound facilities plan, including backup or contingency
2 plans if appropriate;

3 34. A requirement that the charter school governing board meet
4 at a minimum quarterly in the state and that for those charter
5 schools outside of counties with a population of five hundred
6 thousand (500,000) or more, that a majority of members are residents
7 within the geographic boundary of the sponsoring entity; and

8 35. A requirement that the charter school follow the
9 requirements of the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act and Oklahoma Open
10 Records Act.

11 C. A board of education of a public school district, public
12 body, public or private college or university, private person, or
13 private organization may contract with a sponsor to establish a
14 charter school. A private school shall not be eligible to contract
15 for a charter school under the provisions of the Oklahoma Charter
16 Schools Act.

17 D. The sponsor of a charter school is the board of education of
18 a school district, the board of education of a technology center
19 school district, a higher education institution, the State Board of
20 Education, or a federally recognized Indian tribe which meets the
21 criteria established in Section 3-132 of this title. Any board of
22 education of a school district in the state may sponsor one or more
23 charter schools. The physical location of a charter school
24 sponsored by a board of education of a school district or a

1 technology center school district shall be within the boundaries of
2 the sponsoring school district. ~~The physical location of a charter~~
3 ~~school otherwise sponsored by the State Board of Education pursuant~~
4 ~~to paragraph 8 of subsection A of Section 3-132 of this title shall~~
5 ~~be in the school district in which the application originated.~~

6 E. An applicant for a charter school may submit an application
7 to a proposed sponsor which shall either accept or reject
8 sponsorship of the charter school within ninety (90) days of receipt
9 of the application. If the proposed sponsor rejects the
10 application, it shall notify the applicant in writing of the reasons
11 for the rejection. The applicant may submit a revised application
12 for reconsideration to the proposed sponsor within thirty (30) days
13 after receiving notification of the rejection. The proposed sponsor
14 shall accept or reject the revised application within thirty (30)
15 days of its receipt. ~~Should the sponsor reject the application on~~
16 ~~reconsideration, the applicant may appeal the decision to the State~~
17 ~~Board of Education with the revised application for review pursuant~~
18 ~~to paragraph 8 of subsection A of Section 3-132 of this title. The~~
19 ~~State Board of Education shall hear the appeal no later than sixty~~
20 ~~(60) days from the date received by the Board.~~

21 F. A board of education of a school district, board of
22 education of a technology center school district, higher education
23 institution, or federally recognized Indian tribe sponsor of a
24 charter school shall notify the State Board of Education when it

1 accepts sponsorship of a charter school. The notification shall
2 include a copy of the charter of the charter school.

3 G. Applicants for charter schools proposed to be sponsored by
4 ~~an entity other than a school district~~ pursuant to ~~paragraph 1 of~~
5 subsection A of Section 3-132 of this title may, upon rejection of
6 the revised application, proceed to binding arbitration under the
7 commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association with costs
8 of the arbitration to be borne by the proposed sponsor. Applicants
9 ~~for charter schools proposed to be sponsored by school districts~~
10 ~~pursuant to paragraph 1 of subsection A of Section 3-132 of this~~
11 ~~title may not proceed to binding arbitration but may be sponsored by~~
12 ~~the State Board of Education as provided in paragraph 8 of~~
13 ~~subsection A of Section 3-132 of this title.~~

14 H. If a board of education of a technology center school
15 district, a higher education institution, the State Board of
16 Education, or a federally recognized Indian tribe accepts
17 sponsorship of a charter school, the administrative, fiscal and
18 oversight responsibilities of the technology center school district,
19 the higher education institution, or the federally recognized Indian
20 tribe shall be listed in the contract. No responsibilities shall be
21 delegated to a school district unless the local school district
22 agrees to assume the responsibilities.

23 I. A sponsor of a public charter school shall have the
24 following powers and duties:

1 1. Provide oversight of the operations of charter schools in
2 the state through annual performance reviews of charter schools and
3 reauthorization of charter schools for which it is a sponsor;

4 2. Solicit and evaluate charter applications;

5 3. Approve quality charter applications that meet identified
6 educational needs and promote a diversity of educational choices;

7 4. Decline to approve weak or inadequate charter applications;

8 5. Negotiate and execute sound charter contracts with each
9 approved public charter school;

10 6. Monitor, in accordance with charter contract terms, the
11 performance and legal compliance of charter schools; and

12 7. Determine whether each charter contract merits renewal,
13 nonrenewal or revocation.

14 J. Sponsors shall establish a procedure for accepting,
15 approving, and disapproving charter school applications in
16 accordance with subsection E of this section.

17 K. Sponsors shall be required to develop and maintain
18 chartering policies and practices consistent with recognized
19 principles and standards for quality charter authorizing as
20 established by the State Department of Education in all major areas
21 of authorizing responsibility, including organizational capacity and
22 infrastructure, soliciting and evaluating charter applications,
23 performance contracting, ongoing charter school oversight and
24 evaluation, and charter renewal decision-making.

1 L. Sponsors acting in their official capacity shall be immune
2 from civil and criminal liability with respect to all activities
3 related to a charter school with which they contract.

4 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2023.

5 SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
6 of the public peace, health, or safety, an emergency is hereby
7 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
8 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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