

## Progressive framework for strong public charter schools

## Trump and DeVos' plan for private school vouchers

### Bottom line: Looking out for kids

#### Excellent public school options for students

- Students enroll in their local public school, a magnet school, a public charter school, or another high-quality public school in their district or a nearby community.<sup>1</sup>

#### High bar for opening a charter school

- Approval from a district or independent authorizer that engages in responsible oversight by maintaining high standards for schools, upholding school autonomy, and protecting student and public interests.<sup>3</sup>
- Experienced leadership with a strong educational plan.<sup>4</sup>
- Fully developed facilities and finance plan.<sup>5</sup>

#### Open and nondiscriminatory student enrollment

- Districts serve all students regardless of socioeconomic status, race, native language, religion, or ability.<sup>8</sup>
- Charters open to all students and use a lottery to select students if oversubscribed.<sup>9</sup>
- Public schools are free for all families.<sup>10</sup>
- Ideally, districts have a unified information and enrollment system so that all families can easily access comparable school information and have a fair shot at their preferred public schools.<sup>11</sup>

#### Transparency

- All public school students take the same statewide tests to measure their performance and progress against state standards. These standards are aligned with readiness for college and careers.<sup>16</sup>
- Reporting of student performance by schools that is disaggregated to understand potential gaps among race, socioeconomic status, disability status, and English language proficiency.<sup>17</sup>
- All public schools are part of the state's accountability system.<sup>18</sup>
- All students with disabilities, except the most severely disabled, are held to the same academic standards.<sup>19</sup>
- Charter schools are accountable to their authorizers for student learning in exchange for freedom from many policies and regulations.<sup>20</sup>

#### Strong oversight for charters

- Limited number of charter authorizing entities in each community.
- High bar for charter renewal, dependent on comprehensive reviews of academic, financial, and other evidence, as well as of compliance with applicable laws.<sup>24</sup>
- Strong accountability for charter authorizers, including annual reporting on performance and regular state review and evaluation.<sup>25</sup>
- Uniform standards for sanctioning or shutting down underperforming authorizers.<sup>26</sup>

### Looking out for the bottom line

#### Funding for students to attend private schools

- Students receive funding in the form of vouchers, tax credit scholarships, education savings accounts, or individual tax credits to attend private, often religious schools.<sup>2</sup>

#### Low bar for private schools to receive voucher funds

- Agreement to undergo a financial audit.<sup>6</sup>
- Compliance with health and safety laws and a valid occupancy permit, if required by the city.<sup>7</sup>

#### Potentially discriminatory student enrollment

- Private schools may have selective admissions requirements, allowing schools to push out low-income students; students of color; English language learners; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBT, students; students who practice faiths other than that of the school; and students with disabilities.<sup>12</sup>
- May not be affordable if tuition for school exceeds funding amount.<sup>13</sup>
- Many voucher programs require students with disabilities to sign away rights to protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.<sup>14</sup>
- State provides no central information and enrollment resource for parents, making it more difficult for those without time, connections, or know-how to make informed choices between public and private schools.<sup>15</sup>

#### Less transparency

- Students attending private schools with vouchers are not required to take the same statewide tests to measure their performance and progress against state standards.<sup>21</sup>
- Public reporting of student information by the state, or an organization chosen by the state, that is not disaggregated.<sup>22</sup>
- Schools are not held accountable based on state standards that are aligned with readiness for college and careers.<sup>23</sup>
- Expectations may be lowered for subgroups of students based on English language needs, race, or disability, with no academic standards required in private schools.

#### Weak oversight for charters and private schools

- Large number of charter authorizing entities and potential for "authorizer shopping."<sup>27</sup>
- No meaningful accountability for private schools that receive public funds.
- Low bar for charter approval and authorization renewal.<sup>28</sup>
- Little to no accountability for charter authorizers, including minimal reporting on performance of authorized schools and weak mechanisms to terminate underperforming authorizers.<sup>29</sup>
- Inadequate prohibitions around board independence, nepotism, and conflicts of interest for charter schools.<sup>30</sup>

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## Endnotes

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