



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Bill Perkins

More Scrutiny as Charter Schools Look to Expand

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By NICHOLAS CONFESSORE and JENNIFER MEDINA

ALBANY — During its first years of operation, the Niagara Charter School in Niagara Falls, N.Y., spent thousands of dollars on plane tickets, restaurant meals and alcohol, and more than \$100,000 on no-bid consulting contracts. Yet the school's teachers resorted to organizing a fund-raiser to buy playground equipment.

When the Roosevelt Children's Academy, a charter school in Long Island, fired its management company after paying it more than \$1 million a year, it hired two of the school's board members as new managers — and paid them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And in the Bronx, the Family Life Charter School pays \$400,000 annually to rent classroom space from the Latino Pastoral Action Center, a “Christ-centered holistic ministry” led by the Rev. Raymond Rivera. Rev. Rivera also happens to be the school’s founder

Charter school advocates, including Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, are vigorously lobbying for a bill that would more than double the number of charters in New York State and would send at least \$2 billion in taxpayer money a year into the charter system.

Supporters want the bill to pass before the June 1 deadline by which states must apply to win a share of \$700 million in Race to the Top federal education grants that place a premium on an expansion of charter schools...

...The issue of accountability has emerged as a major sticking point in negotiations over the bill, which would raise the cap on charters to 460 from 200. The bill has been passed by the Senate but remains hung up in the Assembly.

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