



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

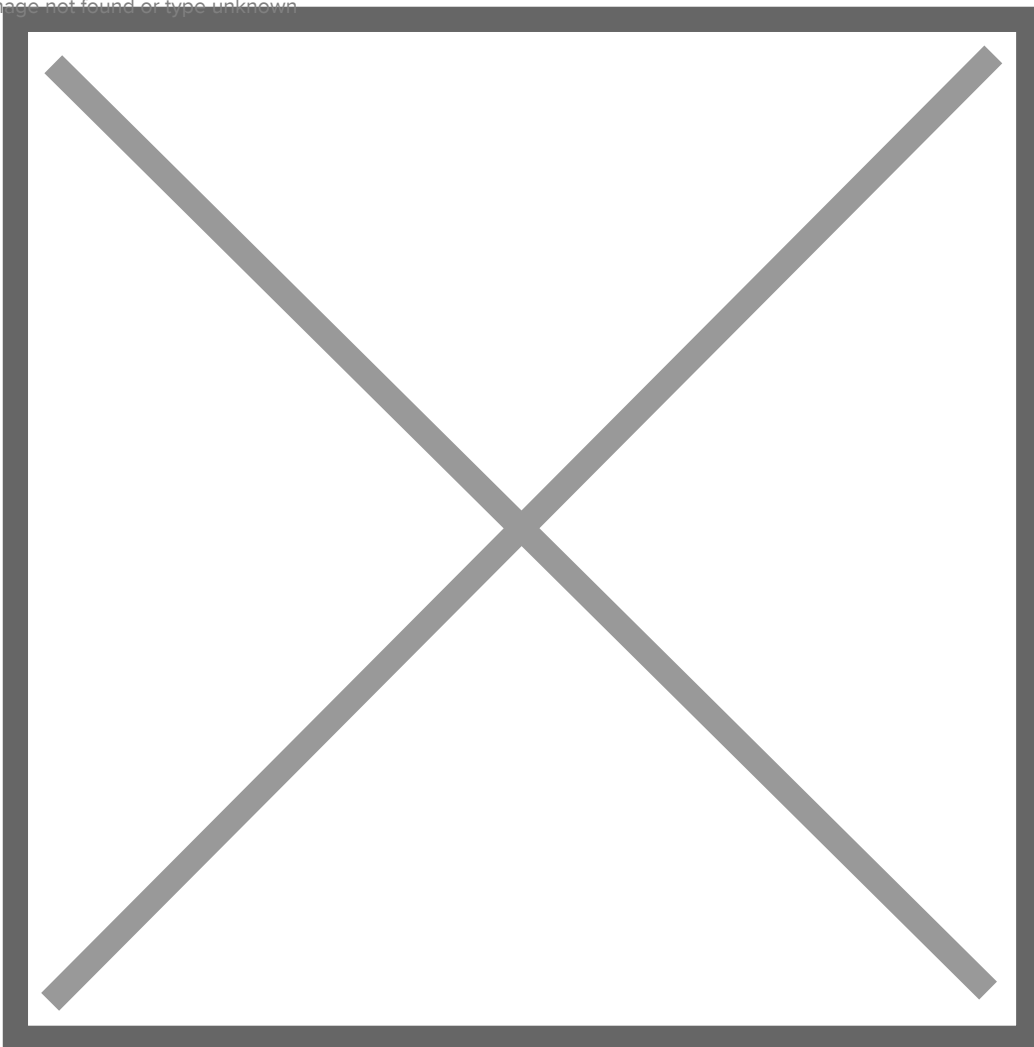
Bill Perkins

Don't Lift the Cap.

BILL PERKINS January 18, 2010

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

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Don't Lift the Cap

January 18, 2010

Dear Colleague:

I write to urge you to vote against lifting the cap on charter schools in New York. I am also asking that you co sponsor and vote for the attached legislation I am introducing in the Tuesday, January 19th Session that addresses some of the inequitable and over saturation conditions that certain communities have experienced from the placement of charters we already have.

Governor Paterson wants to apply for federal Race to the Top aid for public schools. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan made it clear that the federal government will deny such funds to states that restrict the growth of charter schools. Charter school advocates are urging the legislature to vote to lift the cap.

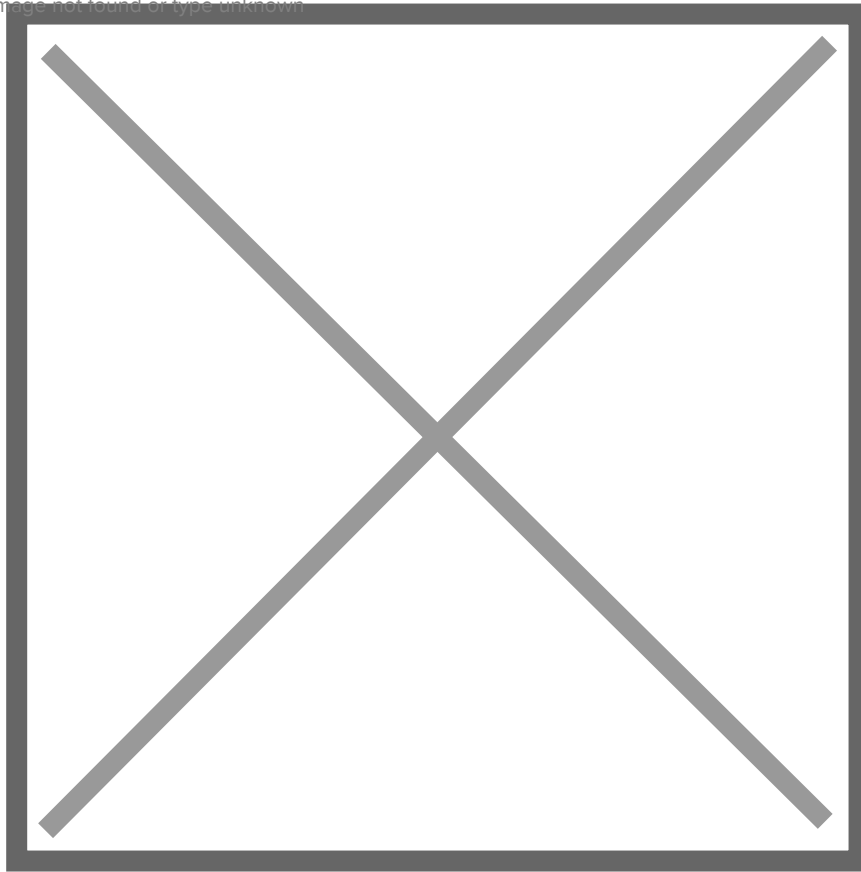
New York must not lift the cap on charter schools. Proponents argue that charter schools provide necessary alternatives to underperforming public school systems. That is not accurate. Charter schools divert funding and other necessary resources from public schools, resulting in a two-tiered school system that is the very definition of "separate, and inherently unequal." Charters are primarily placed in existing public schools located in Black and Latino neighborhoods. While charters are proliferating all over these communities, traditional public schools located in these same communities or that serve students primarily from these communities are closing daily. How is it that we know exactly how to create successful learning environments in other communities yet when it comes to Black

and Latino communities all that is offered are charters which are experimental and unproven for the most part.

Harlem has grown rapidly into ground zero for charter schools. I have witnessed their growth and deleterious impact on public schools. Charters compete with public schools for space and resources. While admission is supposed to be based on a lottery, charters manage to “cream”, or drain higher-scoring students from public schools. Originally charters were supposed to find their own facilities and funding. Increasingly they encroach on public school space and public dollars.

Charters come into existing school buildings with freshly painted classrooms, modern equipment, smart boards, renovated bathrooms and other “goodies” that all students should have, while the existing classrooms and students remain without. They force public school children to see the disparities between their own facilities and those of the charter classrooms. These ill thought of placements of charters into existing public school buildings have resulted in tensions, conflict and resentment between students, parents, teachers and staff of the two schools.

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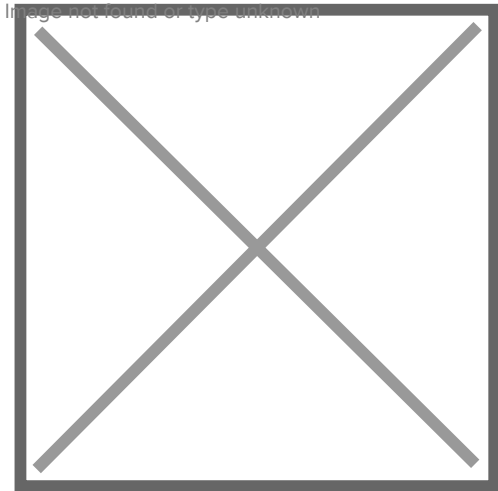


This over saturation of charter schools in communities of color and the public schools located within them has gone too far already. Just this past week parents and community leaders protested the NYC Department of Education's latest proposal to place yet another charter school in P.S. 30, an otherwise successful public school, also in the Harlem area of my district. The community is outraged at the rate and manner in which these schools are being imposed on our school system and in our school buildings no matter what the cost or damage. At the same time, our public schools are under supported and disregarded in the process.

A vote to lift the cap on charters is not a vote to improve the public schools. The Race to the Top would in fact be a "race to the bottom" for our public schools if we lift the cap. There is no guarantee that New York will receive any money from this application yet we are being

asked to lift the cap. If we do lift the cap the only guarantee is that our already struggling school system and existing public schools will be strained even more when funds and resources are further depleted to fund the additional charter schools. Please vote, "No!" when asked to consider raising the cap on charters in New York. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Bill Perkins, Senator

30th

District