

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A MORATORIUM ON CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION AND A HALT TO THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

October 5, 2017

WHEREAS, we as Democrats believe that a “strong public education system is an anchor of our democracy, a propeller of the economy, and the vehicle through which we help all children achieve their dreams” (1); and

WHEREAS, we as Democrats believe that “public education is the cornerstone of our social, economic, and political structure,” (2) the very “foundation of good citizenship,” and the fundamental prerequisite to every child’s future success (3) ; and

WHEREAS, we as Democrats believe in the promise of Article IX of the Florida Constitution, that “the education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida.” That it is “a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders.” And that “adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high-quality system of free public schools” (4); and

WHEREAS, Florida’s Democrats stand committed to investing in Florida’s public schools, colleges, and universities, because education is the bridge that will lead millions into the middle class (5); and

WHEREAS, before school choice was implemented, charter schools were initially promoted by educators who sought to innovate within the local public school system to better meet the needs of their students (6); and

WHEREAS, charter schools have been a rapidly growing sector of the education system, increasingly targeting low-income areas and communities of color (7), in school districts that were already struggling to meet students’ needs due to longstanding, systemic and ingrained patterns of institutional neglect, racial and ethnic segregation, inequitable school funding, and disparities in staff, programs and services (8); and

WHEREAS, the result has been the creation of separate, largely unaccountable, privately-managed charter school systems that undermine support and funding of local public schools; and

WHEREAS, such separate and unequal education systems are disproportionately located in, and harm, students and communities of color by depriving both of the high quality public education system that should be their right; and

WHEREAS, charter schools with privately-appointed boards do not represent the public yet make decisions about how public funds are spent; and (9);

WHEREAS, weak oversight of charter schools puts students and communities at risk of harm, public funds at risk of being wasted, and further erodes local control of public education; and (10);

WHEREAS, HB 7069, passed in 2017, and other legislation loosening the oversight of charter schools, directing public money to privately-managed for-profit companies, and pushing oversight further away

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from local school districts, parents and teachers, continues to dilute the promise of the Florida Constitution for a high-quality and uniform public education system;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Palm Beach County Democratic Party opposes privatizing public schools and subsidizing for-profit charter schools with public money; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Palm Beach County Democratic Party supports existing public charter schools that are authorized by a public school district only if the charter is both necessary to meet the needs of students in the district and will meet those needs in a manner that improves the local public school system; like all public schools, charter schools must provide students with a free, accessible, non-sectarian, quality education that is delivered subject to the same basic safeguards and standards as every other public school; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Palm Beach County Democratic Party supports parental, student, teacher and community involvement as fundamental to the creation of any new charter school, or as part of any turnaround scheme aimed at privatizing a public school; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Palm Beach County Democratic Party, following the example of prominent national organizations such as the NAACP ⁽¹⁰⁾, the Movement for Black Lives ⁽¹¹⁾, and the National Education Association, hereby calls for a moratorium on any new privately-managed for-profit charter schools in Florida, until there are fair and adequate safeguards put in place to ensure our children are protected and our tax dollars are not wasted; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Palm Beach County Democratic Party calls for full funding and support of high quality free public education for all children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Palm Beach County Democratic Party will seek and support legislation to strengthen the oversight of charter schools, with the goal of returning control to local school districts, parents and teachers, and will oppose any legislation that seeks to weaken oversight and accountability of charter schools and further privatize our public education system.

1 DNC platform: <https://www.democrats.org/party-platform#profit-schools>

2 NEA Resolution A-1: <https://ra.nea.org/nea-policy-statement-charter-schools/>

3 Brown v. Bd. of Ed. of Topeka, Shawnee Cty., Kan., 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954).

4 FL Const Art. IX Sec. 1: <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?submenu=3#A9>

5 FL Dems Platform: <http://www.floridadems.org/our-values/education>

6 NEA

7 NAACP Resolution: http://www.naacp.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/08/Charter_School_Resolution.2016.pdf

8 NEA DPCF Resolution on Charter Schools Democratic Party and Democratic National Committee to encourage similar action.

9 NAACP

10 NAACP

11 Movement for Black Lives: <https://policy.m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Community-Control-of-Schools-Policy-Brief>