



## **OPPOSE: HB 814, FA #3 to Eliminate the Cap on Charter Schools**

**Background:** Floor amendment #1 to HB 814 mirrors Gov. Rauner's proposal to eliminate the statutory cap on the number of charter schools in Illinois. Currently the cap is 120, with 75 available charter schools in Chicago and 45 available in the rest of the state. This proposal is especially curious given that Illinois is nowhere near the cap, especially outside of Chicago, as there are only 14 charter schools outside of district 299.

**CTU/IFT/IEA Position: Oppose**

### **Rationale:**

1. Removing the cap exacerbates school funding challenges. Charter school expansion necessarily diverts resources from existing schools while increasing facility maintenance and administrative overhead. More schools are more expensive to operate. Additional pressure to open charter schools, when demand simply does not exist, is unnecessary at a time when school district budgets are already under severe stress.
2. Removing the cap results in a loss of local control. Eliminating the cap on charter schools is an attempt to expand new charters over the objections of school boards and parents. The State Charter School Commission (SCSC) would have the unchecked ability to place an unlimited number of charter schools throughout the state. The SCSC is comprised of 9 members approved by the Governor. Rapid charter growth without local approval is clearly a goal of this legislation.
3. Removing the cap exposes the entire state to the effects of "uncapped" Chicago. A huge loophole in the State's charter law allows Chicago charter operators that had opened prior to 2003 to expand without applying for additional charter agreements. As a result, even though the cap is 70 in Chicago, there are currently 134 charter schools operating in the city. Chains of charter schools that have no semblance to the original vision of single-site schools designed to share promising curricular developments have expanded at will, creating a huge oversupply of school buildings in a city with a stable student population.