

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2014 SESSION

CHAPTER 693

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 22.1-212.6, 22.1-212.8, and 22.1-212.11 of the Code of Virginia, relating to charter schools; restrictions and pre-lottery enrollment for current students of conversion charter schools.

[S 276]

Approved April 6, 2014

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 22.1-212.6, 22.1-212.8, and 22.1-212.11 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-212.6. Establishment and operation of public charter schools; requirements.

A. A public charter school shall be subject to all federal and state laws and regulations and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services and shall be subject to any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for the school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for relevant school divisions.

Enrollment shall be open to any child who is deemed to reside within the relevant school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, within any of the relevant school divisions, as set forth in § 22.1-3, through a lottery process on a space-available basis, *except that in the case of the conversion of an existing public school, students who attend the school and the siblings of such students shall be given the opportunity to enroll in advance of the lottery process.* A waiting list shall be established if adequate space is not available to accommodate all students whose parents have requested to be entered in the lottery process. Such waiting list shall also be prioritized through a lottery process and parents shall be informed of their student's position on the list.

B. A public charter school shall be administered and managed by a management committee, composed of parents of students enrolled in the school, teachers and administrators working in the school, and representatives of any community sponsors, in a manner agreed to by the public charter school applicant and the local school board. Pursuant to a charter contract and as specified in § 22.1-212.7, a public charter school may operate free from specified school division policies and state regulations, and, as public schools, shall be subject to the requirements of the Standards of Quality, including the Standards of Learning and the Standards of Accreditation.

C. Pursuant to a charter agreement, a public charter school shall be responsible for its own operations, including, but not limited to, such budget preparation, contracts for services, and personnel matters as are specified in the charter agreement. A public charter school may negotiate and contract with a school division, the governing body of a public institution of higher education, or any third party for the use of a school building and grounds, the operation and maintenance thereof, and the provision of any service, activity, or undertaking which the public charter school is required to perform in order to carry out the educational program described in its charter. Any services for which a public charter school contracts with a school division shall not exceed the division's costs to provide such services.

D. As negotiated by contract, the local school board or the relevant school boards, in the case of regional public charter schools, may allow a public charter school to use vacant or unused properties or real estate owned by the school board. In no event shall a public charter school be required to pay rent for space which is deemed available, as negotiated by contract, in school division facilities. All other costs for the operation and maintenance of the facilities used by the public charter school shall be subject to negotiation between the public charter school and the school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, between the regional public charter school and the relevant school divisions.

E. A public charter school shall not charge tuition.

§ 22.1-212.8. Charter application.

A. Any person, group, or organization, including any institution of higher education, may submit an application for the formation of a public charter school.

B. The public charter school application shall be a proposed agreement and shall include:

1. The mission statement of the public charter school that must be consistent with the principles of the Standards of Quality.

2. The goals and educational objectives to be achieved by the public charter school, which educational objectives must meet or exceed the Standards of Learning.

3. Evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers, pupils, or any combination thereof, support the formation of a public charter school.

4. A statement of the need for a public charter school in a school division or relevant school

divisions in the case of a regional public charter school, or in a geographic area within a school division or relevant school divisions, as the case may be.

5. A description of the public charter school's educational program, pupil performance standards, and curriculum, which must meet or exceed any applicable Standards of Quality; any assessments to be used to measure pupil progress towards achievement of the school's pupil performance standards, in addition to the Standards of Learning assessments prescribed by § 22.1-253.13:3; the timeline for achievement of such standards; and the procedures for taking corrective action in the event that pupil performance at the public charter school falls below such standards.

6. A description of the lottery process to be used to determine enrollment, *including a provision that in the case of the conversion of an existing public school, students who attend the school and the siblings of such students shall be given the opportunity to enroll in advance of the lottery process.* A lottery process shall also be developed for the establishment of a waiting list for such students for whom space is unavailable and, if appropriate, a tailored admission policy that meets the specific mission or focus of the public charter school and is consistent with all federal and state laws and regulations and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination that are applicable to public schools and with any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for the school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, in effect for any of the relevant school divisions.

7. Evidence that the plan for the public charter school is economically sound for both the public charter school and the school division or relevant school divisions, as the case may be; a proposed budget for the term of the charter; and a description of the manner in which an annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the public charter school, including any services provided by the school division or relevant school divisions, as the case may be, is to be conducted.

8. A plan for the displacement of pupils, teachers, and other employees who will not attend or be employed in the public charter school, in instances of the conversion of an existing public school to a public charter school, and for the placement of public charter school pupils, teachers, and employees upon termination or revocation of the charter.

9. A description of the management and operation of the public charter school, including the nature and extent of parental, professional educator, and community involvement in the management and operation of the public charter school.

10. An explanation of the relationship that will exist between the proposed public charter school and its employees, including evidence that the terms and conditions of employment have been addressed with affected employees.

11. An agreement between the parties regarding their respective legal liability and applicable insurance coverage.

12. A description of how the public charter school plans to meet the transportation needs of its pupils.

13. Assurances that the public charter school (i) is nonreligious in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations and (ii) does not charge tuition.

14. In the case of a residential charter school for at-risk students, a description of (i) the residential program, facilities, and staffing; (ii) any parental education and after-care initiatives; (iii) the funding sources for the residential and other services provided; and (iv) any counseling or other social services to be provided and their coordination with any current state or local initiatives.

15. [Expired.]

16. Disclosure of any ownership or financial interest in the public charter school, by the charter applicant and the governing body, administrators, and other personnel of the proposed public charter school, and a requirement that the successful applicant and the governing body, administrators, and other personnel of the public charter school shall have a continuing duty to disclose such interests during the term of any charter.

C. [Expired.]

D. The charter applicant shall include in the proposed agreement the results of any Board of Education review of the public charter school application that may have been conducted as provided in subsection C of § 22.1-212.9.

§ 22.1-212.11. Public charter school restrictions.

A. Local school boards may establish public charter schools within the school division. Priority shall be given to public charter school applications designed to increase the educational opportunities of at-risk students, and at least one-half of the public charter schools per division shall be *designed* for at-risk students; *however, the one-half requirement shall not apply in cases in which an existing public school is converted into a public charter school that serves the same community as the existing public school, nor shall such public charter school conversions be counted in the determination of school division compliance with the one-half requirement.*

B. Local school boards shall report the grant or denial of public charter school applications to the Board and shall specify the maximum number of charters that may be authorized, if any; the number of charters granted or denied; and whether a public charter school is designed to increase the educational opportunities of at-risk students.

C. Nothing in this article shall be construed to prevent a school that is the only school in the division from applying to become a public charter school.