



SF 1386: Improving Charter School Accountability & Quality through Authorizers

All parents want what’s best for their kids and should have the power to choose the right school for their children from a range of high-quality options. This power is particularly important for families whose children are most underserved in our schools. To provide these opportunities, it’s incumbent on Minnesota to ensure that students and families have access to high-quality school options, including charter schools. To fulfill this, it’s essential to have high-quality charter authorizers.

THE ROLE OF CHARTER AUTHORIZERS

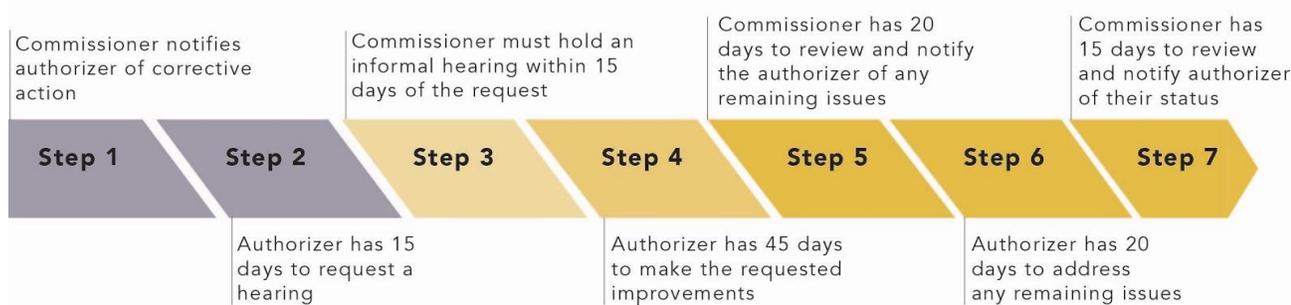
Charter schools have an extra layer of oversight by reporting outcomes back to “authorizers.” Authorizers can be education or nonprofit entities, and they are responsible for ensuring the schools in their portfolio are fulfilling their mission, and the terms of their contract. High-quality authorizers help guide schools to meet their goals and provide a quality education for all students.

Authorizers are evaluated every five years as part of the Minnesota Authorizer Performance Evaluation System (MAPES). They can be placed in “corrective action” if their systems and policies do not meet state expectations. While under corrective action, authorizers cannot charter new schools, accept transfer requests from charters seeking a new authorizer, or allow authorized charters to expand. In short, a successful charter with an authorizer in corrective action cannot grow or replicate its model and cannot change authorizers without mutual agreement. Because of the implications, quick action to remedy the problem is essential, but hasn’t always been the norm.

CORRECTIVE ACTION TIMELINE

Historically, the corrective action timeline has been unpredictable, lasting anywhere from weeks to years. This is due to the nature of MAPES: an authorizer may be placed into corrective action for relatively minor infractions like having an unclear mission or goals which can be resolved quickly. In other cases, an authorizer may have unsatisfactory ratings in multiple categories like operational budgets or unclear processes for charter school oversight that can take longer to rectify.

SF1386 removes this uncertainty by creating a six month timeline from notification of corrective action to the completion of the process. This increases transparency by creating an end date for improvements, sets guardrails for charter schools to have a clearer picture of the relationship, and raises the overall quality of charter authorizers.



ACCOUNTABILITY

The Commissioner of Education can terminate an authorizer for a number of reasons. SF1386 adds the authority to terminate an authorizer for not meeting the terms of a corrective action plan by the end of the six month period. Additionally, charter schools whose authorizer has not met the six month corrective action deadline can submit a transfer request, allowing them to leave an ineffective authorizer relationship.