

Nebraska Group Vows to Fight Efforts to Start Charter School Law

By Sarah Tully on March 24, 2016 9:50 AM | [1 Comment](#)

Earlier this month, I told you about a **new parent effort to bring charter schools to Nebraska, one of just eight states that don't have a charter school law.**

Soon after, the leaders of another group contacted me to say they have a different take: They are fighting any charter school attempts in Nebraska.

Nebraska Loves Public Schools officials reached out to emphasize that not everyone wants charter schools. The group started an online petition on March 1 to show support for public schools, although the petition doesn't specifically state its opposition to charter schools. Sally Nellson Barrett, executive director of Nebraska Loves Public School, claims the petition has about 5,000 signatures.

"Charters schools are going to pull money away from public schools, and I think it puts our kids at risk," Nellson Barrett said.

There's no active state legislation for charter schools in Nebraska this year, and attempts in previous years have failed.

But the debate over charters is alive and growing in the state. **Gov. Pete Ricketts** supports charter schools and **signed a proclamation in support of National School Choice Week in January.** A new group, **Educate Nebraska**, launched its initiative this year to push for charter schools, as **KETV reported in January.**

That's why the Nebraska Loves Public Schools group is ramping up its efforts to push back, Nellson Barrett said.

"Nothing is happening in this legislative session. It absolutely will happen next year," Nellson Barrett said.

Her group started about five years ago with a grant from the **Sherwood Foundation** based in Nebraska to produce short and long **documentary films** highlighting the positive impact of public schools. But the group decided to branch out as the charter school movement began increasing advocacy in the state, Nellson Barrett said.

A film, **"Consider the Alternative,"** was made and shown across the state to demonstrate the group's opposition to charter schools. The online petition drive was started this month, asking supporters to sign on to this statement: "I pledge to love public schools and to show support for them however I can."

Although Nellson Barrett said the group clearly opposes charter schools, there's no specific mention of charter schools on the pledge's webpage—and that was intentional. Instead, the group wanted to demonstrate widespread support for public schools as it gears up to fight charter schools. Also, the group is putting up billboards and paying for TV spots statewide.

"I think that most importantly, we are *for* things, not against things," Nellson Barrett said. "We first want to rally support and just have people pay attention."

The group is not parent-led, although many parents have signed the petition, Nellson Barrett said. But the group wants to get the word out that good things are happening, and can happen more, in public schools. "What people say they want to do in charter schools is 100 percent possible in public schools," she said.

Last year, **Alabama became the latest to add a charter school law. Kentucky lawmakers are considering a charter-school bill** this year. And Washington state may see the return of charter schools, after the state's supreme court **ruled that the original charter school law was unconstitutional**. The legislature passed a **new charter school bill**, which is on Gov. Jay Inslee's desk.

Education Week will continue to track the charter school laws in Nebraska and beyond.

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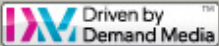
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A bit misleading. Charter schools are public schools, just as are traditional public schools. The point of charters is to provide meaningful choice for parents, and the 20 year results are clear: charter schools work very well.



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