

Viewpoints

Iowa Charter School Bill Would Allow One Out-of-State Board Member



A new bill on its way to Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds' desk could mark a shift in how public charter school boards are structured in Iowa. House File 785 would permit one member of a public charter school's governing board to live outside the state—a change from the current requirement that all members reside within Iowa.

This proposal, introduced by the Iowa Department of Education, aligns Iowa more closely with 43 other states that don't require full in-state residency for charter board members. According to the Iowa Coalition for Public Charter Schools, only Iowa, Alaska, and Virginia have these restrictions.

Supporters argue the change is especially relevant for schools located near Iowa's borders, where qualified individuals with relevant expertise may live just across state lines. The bill also formalizes a requirement that all board members be U.S. citizens.

Opponents, however, raised concerns about the potential for undue influence from “outsiders” and noted that the original in-state residency requirement was the product of bipartisan compromise when Iowa’s charter law was first expanded a few years ago.

With the number of Iowa charter schools drastically growing, this legislation could have a significant impact on board recruitment and governance.

Out of the 46 states which allow charter schools, Iowa, Alaska and Virginia are the only ones where all board members are required to live in the state

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Professionals



Lauren Rubio

Associate

San Diego

760.814.6127

lrubio@f3law.com



Peter K. Fagen

Partner

San Diego

760.304.6000

pfagen@f3law.com