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SB 2241 in Support
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Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Education Committee.

I am Lisa Grover, Senior Director of State Advocacy and Support at the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools. Our mission is to lead public education to unprecedented levels of academic achievement by fostering a strong charter school movement. Our goal is not to have all public school students attend a public school. Rather, our vision is that every family can choose a high-performing public school that delivers an excellent education for their children. Public charter schools are not in opposition to district schools, in fact, they are often quite complimentary. Students have such different interests and learning needs, and we can't expect all public schools no matter how great they are to be all things to all kids. This is where public school options become so important

I live in ABQ, NM and I spent my career in education, first as a teacher, education advocate, and mom.

So what is a Charter School?

- A charter school is a public school that is granted more flexibility to innovate in exchange for a performance agreement. Forty-six states, Washington DC, Puerto Rico and Guam have charter school laws. In each of these jurisdictions, a charter school is statutorily defined as a public school.

Minnesota passed the first public charter school law in 1991. In the 2,000's, more than 35 states had charter schools.

- I'd like to offer a brief snapshot of the National Charter School Movement.
- 3.8 million students attend a public charter school and there are 8,100 public charter schools across our nation.

- Rural charter schools make up 11% of charter schools and serve 10% of charter school students. That is 80,000 students currently attend a public charter school.
- Public charter schools have been around for more than 35 years, and North Dakota is one of only four states which do not currently allow for their creation.

I am here in support of SB 2241. There are a number of reasons I sit here today in support of this bill. Here below are three of the primary reasons:

1. A high of accountability and transparency, from charter performance agreements and quality authorizing practices to the clear provisions for financial transparency and ensuring special education students receive full services and fair treatment. Every charter school works under a performance agreement with the state superintendent, along with the imperative to meet or exceed state performance standards and graduation requirements.
2. Student-Centered Law. What I mean is that families and students have a direct say in the kind of education that meets their children's interests and needs. Public charter schools have a different approach to public education. It's a "bottom's up" approach rather than a top-down approach. In some ways public charter schools are a return to the red school house. SB 2241 requires a local community to demonstrate support for a new public charter school. Simply put, if a community doesn't show support for the public charter school, it simply won't happen. This bill will allow communities the opportunity to begin conversations if they choose.
3. Rural Charter Schools – Positive Impact
 - More than 320,000 students attend 836 rural charter schools, or about 11%.
 - There are charter schools in rural areas around the country, but they are more prevalent in a few states. In 10 states, more than 25% of

charter school students are in rural charter schools: Alabama, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, and Wyoming. Hawaii has the largest number of rural charter schools, California, Texas, and Florida have the largest numbers of students in rural charter schools. And Hawaii has the highest proportion of public charter schools, at almost 30%.

- All four states that passed a new public charter school in the last ten years are rural states: Maine, Mississippi, Alabama, and West Virginia. ci charter school law
- I'm a founder of one of the first rural charter schools in NM, now in its 20th year, and establishing our school brought the community together, especially once we opened the school. Today, despite a rocky two year start, it's a collaborative relationship between the two schools.

I sit here today having spent twenty five years in education, as a teacher, public school founder, education advocate, and mom. I've seen many great public charter schools doing amazing things for students, often on a shoe string budget. I've yet to see a public school close because of a new charter school.

I encourage you to seriously consider enacting this legislation. It's highly accountable, transparent, and provides the right level of flexibility. Thank you and I'm ready to help at any time.