

Date of Hearing: April 11, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 3167 (O'Donnell) – As Amended April 2, 2018

SUBJECT: Charter schools: inquiries

SUMMARY: Establishes the Charter Authorizer Regional Support Network (CARNet) and provides up to \$30 million in funding over five years, upon appropriation in the budget act. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Makes Legislative findings and declarations regarding the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network, a project of the Alameda County Office of Education funded by a grant awarded by the United States Department of Education over the last three years, which established a successful model for building strong charter authorizing practices in California.
- 2) Specifies that up to thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000), upon appropriation from the General Fund by the Legislature, may be expended by the Alameda County Office of Education for purposes of the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network and specifies that funds shall be expended no later than five fiscal years after the appropriation is made.
- 3) Requires the program to expand the network of assistance and support through a regional network structure, and further develop quality fiscal, academic, and governance oversight and monitoring tools for uniform charter authorizing practices.
- 4) Specifies the responsibilities of the Alameda County Office of Education to include all of the following:
 - a) Acting as the fiscal agent for the grant.
 - b) Developing and implementing a selection process, in consultation with the department, to choose 11 regional lead county offices of education to receive grant awards.
 - c) Collaborating with leading charter authorizers and county offices of education in the development and dissemination of quality authorizing tools and best practices to ensure statewide consistency.
 - i) The Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network may consult with the state board in the development of quality authorizing tools and best practices.
 - d) Creating and maintaining an online database of materials that can be adapted for use by charter authorizers.
 - e) Facilitating at least four meetings per year of regional lead county offices of education, and conducting an annual statewide conference for charter school authorizers.
 - f) Facilitating at least two meetings per year of the advisory board to provide input on the development and full implementation of services.

- i) An advisory board shall be created, to be composed of experienced professionals from county offices of education, school districts, school district governing boards, and other organizations, and one charter school representative.
 - g) Providing information, as requested, to the Legislative Analyst's Office to measure the program's continual improvement and program fidelity, and to document the program's impact.
- 5) Requires, from the appropriation made, the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network to award up to twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) in total grant funds to 11 regional lead county offices of education. Allocation of grant funds for each regional lead county office of education shall be used to improve the quality of school district and county office of education charter school authorizing activity within its designated region.
- 6) Requires a regional lead county office of education to use its allocation for the following activities, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
- a) Providing technical assistance and support on charter petitions and oversight to all school districts and county offices of education in the region. Technical assistance includes, among other things, any of the following:
 - i) Identifying and maintaining a list of school district and county office of education personnel designated as responsible for charter authorizing activity and all charter school sites in the region. Charter authorizers shall be invited and encouraged to attend region meetings and trainings to build their knowledge and expertise.
 - ii) Technical assistance with the charter petition review process, including best practices for charter petition review, adherence to timelines, and memorandum of understanding development.
 - iii) Technical assistance with oversight, including best practices for ongoing monitoring and site reviews.
 - b) Collaborating with the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network to develop templates for charter petition reviews and oversight, consistent training modules and presentations, and memorandums of understanding.
 - c) Seeking input from charter school authorizers in the region to determine the type of charter authorizer training and support needed, and building the capacity of charter authorizers through training.
 - d) Providing at least four in-person meetings or trainings of charter authorizing personnel in school districts and county offices of education in the region each year, in order to provide an equitable opportunity for participation in geographically diverse locations within the region.

- e) Participating in the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network annual statewide conference and any other Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network statewide meetings.
 - f) Providing program data to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network in improving the quality of authorizing practice.
 - g) Providing outreach and financial incentives to charter authorizers that have not previously participated in Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network trainings or conferences.
- 7) Requires, when awarding grants, the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network to give special consideration to all of the following:
- a) County offices of education with strong charter authorizing infrastructure already in place.
 - b) County offices of education that represent 11 distinct geographic regions throughout the state.
 - c) County offices of education that have previously participated in the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network.
- 8) Requires, on or before December 1, 2021, the Legislative Analyst's Office to complete and submit to the Governor and the appropriate education policy and budget committees of the Legislature an evaluation of the Charter Authorizers Regional Support Network Program. The Legislative Analyst's Office shall evaluate the program's effectiveness in administering training programs, outreach, and the participation of charter authorizers that have not participated in trainings and conferences during previous years, and make recommendations regarding the continuation of funding.
- 9) Specifies the measure shall be implemented only upon an appropriation in the annual Budget Act or other statute for these purposes.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Charter school authorizers have very few resources for technical assistance and support of their charter authorizing and oversight work. A few charter authorizers have an office of staff focused on charter school authorizing and oversight, however, most authorizers are so small that they don't have any dedicated charter school staff. These local education agencies have relied on the assistance of the Charter Authorizer Regional Support Network (CARSNNet) for the past 3 years, while the program was funded with a federal grant. Through CARSNNet, authorizers have received training and attended conferences to polish their expertise in authorizing and oversight. The federal grant funding expires this year, and without state resources the CARSNNet expertise will be lost and authorizers will not have a resource for learning about best practices and tools for proper authorizing and oversight of charter schools.

Over the last 3 years, CARSNNet has held 67 regional trainings and conferences with nearly 1,300 participants from across California. This bill continues the work of CARSNNet by providing up to

\$30 million in state funding over 5 years, upon budget appropriation. Extending CARSNet funding will provide essential resources to continue the positive momentum gained to date and strengthen the ability of school districts and county offices of education to exercise their statutory charter school authorization and oversight responsibilities. Resources will be used to expand the network of assistance and support through its regional network structure, and further develop quality fiscal, academic and governance oversight and monitoring tools for strong charter authorizing practices resulting in the implementation of statewide consistency in charter authorizing and oversight. The bill directs CARSNet to focus on recruiting and providing financial support to districts that have not participated in CARSNet trainings and conferences in the past. This is particularly important for small charter authorizers with few staff, who have been unable to attend conferences and trainings in the past due to capacity. An evaluation will be completed in year four and presented to the Governor and Legislature to consider future funding.

According to the author, "This bill continues the invaluable work of CARSNet by providing \$30 million in state funding over 5 years. This funding will allow CARSNet to continue the model they started under the federal grant program with regional county office leads throughout the state, regional trainings, and statewide conferences for charter authorizers. This resource will strengthen charter school authorizers in their critical role of charter school oversight."

Arguments in Support: The California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) supports the bill and argues, "CARSNet has provided a successful model for building strong charter authorization and oversight practices, a critical issue that CASBO supports at a time when the state needs to strengthen its oversight and fiscal accountability laws on charter school operations. We believe that AB 3167 will continue to provide local educational agencies with opportunities to receive training and assistance on best practices and tools to properly authorize and oversee charter schools. We also appreciate that the bill will expand the direction of CARSNet by requiring the development of regional network structures and monitoring tools for strong charter authorizing practices that will lead to stronger oversight. We believe that all charter school authorizers should have access to academic and governance resources to ensure that all students are provided with quality educational services."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alameda County Office of Education
Butte County Office of Education
California Association of School Business Officials
East Side Union High School District
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
Ventura County Office of Education
West Contra Costa Unified School District

Opposition

None on file

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