



State Senator
Gary K. Hart

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HART'S "CHARTER SCHOOL" BILL PASSES SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Legislation by Senator Gary K. Hart (D-Santa Barbara) to authorize the creation of "charter schools" passed the Senate Education Committee today. SB 1448 passed by a vote of 6 to 5.

These innovative public schools would be initiated by a group of teachers, who obtain a "charter" from a local school board or the State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction. Under the terms of the charter, the specific goals and operating procedures for the school would be spelled out in the agreement between the board and the organizers, but in exchange for committing to the principles outlined in the petition, the school could be freed from the existing, sometimes cumbersome, public school bureaucratic rules and structure.

"The charter school approach is an exciting and bold alternative to providing educational services to students within the public school system," Hart said. "It will offer teachers new professional opportunities to be fully responsible for the learning program at the school site."

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The charter schools could be exempted from existing statutes and regulations covering school districts to allow maximum flexibility in achieving high educational outcomes. However, they would be required to maintain health and safety standards for pupils and staff, operate as nonsectarian entities, be open to all students irrespective of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability and prohibited from charging tuition.

"I believe that many public schools do an outstanding job of educating students. However, too large a percentage of our students are failing and are disillusioned by school," Hart said. "It's obvious that the 'business as usual' approach in our public schools is not working for all of our students and it's time to look at alternative ways in which we can create a stimulating and positive school environment for our children."

Hart added, "The charter school approach represents a major education reform which I believe can invigorate and may liberate our existing system to produce creative new approaches to educating children, while maintaining our traditional democratic commitment to public schools."

SB 1448 now goes to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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