

CC3155 5.26.22 Thursday

**Stephen Dyer's May 20 10<sup>th</sup> Period: "Warning To Biden Admin: Ohio's \$71 Million Federal Charter School Grant Disaster"**

Steve Dyer is an attorney, journalist, former Ohio legislator, and a thoughtful, tenacious public school advocate. His May 20, 2022 10<sup>th</sup> Period shows the senseless, ineffectual use of federal charter school grant funds in Ohio.

**Warning to Biden Admin: Ohio's \$71 million Federal Charter School Grant Disaster**

Amid much fanfare in 2015, Ohio got more money than any other state to improve its Charter Schools. 7 years later, Ohio's only sent \$8 million of the nation's largest grant to 20 schools.

Stephen Dyer

May 20

It was huge news at the time: President Obama's Department of Education awarded \$71 million to Ohio, despite massive evidence from even charter advocates that Ohio's charter schools were really, really poor performing and a regulatory hellscape. Despite mine and others' attempts to warn everybody, the feds went ahead and gave the grant to Ohio.

The state kept the grant event after it was revealed that the guy at the Ohio Department of Education who applied for it (who happened to be the husband of then-Gov. John Kasich's Chief of Staff) lied to protect the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow, which would implode a few years later amid the largest taxpayer ripoff in state history.

Seven years after that grant, Ohio's had to send back a bunch of the money and has only spent \$8 million of it.

Unsurprisingly, Ohio's had a really tough time handing out money to this ill-fated program. Why? Because the money has to go to "high-performing" charter schools — of which Ohio has precious few.

Which helps explain that while 20 schools have received money from the program since 2017, only 5.

That's right.

**Only 5 of the approximately 330 Charter Schools that were in operation during any one of those grant years, received federal money to expand because of their quality. Only 26 would even qualify for the money today. Out of 331 Ohio Charter Schools.**

One would think after 25 years, you'd get more than 7.9% of these schools annually to be "High Quality".

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And what is “High Quality” anyway? According to the state’s guidelines, the schools have to get C or better state report card ratings on several measures. That’s right. High-Quality Charter Schools in Ohio just need to get Cs to qualify for hundreds of thousands of federal dollars because they’re “High Quality”.

Curious about what percentage of Ohio’s local public schools would qualify as “High Quality” under the state’s Charter School definition?

Me too.

It’s about 3 out of every 5 Ohio public school buildings. Ohio’s major urban districts? Try more than 1 in 5 of those buildings. In Akron, it’s nearly 1 in 3 buildings.

Again, by comparison, only 1 in 13 Ohio Charter Schools qualify.

**Ohio’s had 638 Charter Schools that have operated at any time in this state. And only 5 of those got any of the \$71 million in federal money designated in 2015 to expand the state’s “high-quality” Charter Schools.**

Incredible.

The remaining 15 schools that won federal grant money got it to start up. And we don’t know how they’ve performed because of COVID-related performance evaluation interruptions.

[Table]\*

Sadder still?

**One of those 5 schools — Citizens Academy Southeast — is no longer on the state’s high-performing charter school list — despite the school receiving CSP grants for two years to expand.**

Seems like that \$600,000 was poorly spent.

Anyway, can you imagine if Ohio’s public school districts (or a single one) had received a \$71 million federal grant to improve educational options and came back 7 years later only spending \$8 million of it with no evidence of improvement?

[Table]\*

As I’ve said before and at great length, the feds have to stop wasting money on this program and start looking at ways they can support ways to ensure that all students — not a select few — have a better chance of success, regardless of where they live, who they are, or what kind of public school they attend.

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Imagine if the feds would commit to provide any additional revenue needed to fully fund fair and equitable school funding formulas that states refuse to pay for?

As an example.

\*to access the tables referenced in the article, follow the link below

[Warning to Biden Admin: Ohio's \\$71 million Federal Charter School Grant Disaster \(substack.com\)](#)