

Another fraud in the charter school industry—fraud is common in the charter sector because it is under-regulated and there are no education credentials required to form and operate a charter school.

A recent article in the Columbus Dispatch details how a charter school founder/operator committed fraud on the public. He used tax funds for personal gain.

Public school districts are highly regulated and monitored to protect students, parents, taxpayers, school employees and boards of education. In Ohio, except for Cleveland, board members are elected by the school district voters and thus are accountable to the public. School administrators, teachers and other professional employees have state-issued credentials and are held to high standards.

No state-issued credentials are required of founders and operators of charter schools. ECOT, the charter business that stole hundreds of millions from Ohio taxpayers, is a prime example of fundamental accountability and transparency problems inherent in the charter school industry. By the way, the state has been engaged in a 5-year effort to collect tax funds ECOT stole from Ohio taxpayers, but thus far has collected not one dime.

Most of the current state officials benefitted from the ECOT political contributions. The ECOT Man, William Lager, was so politically well-connected that he had a letter of agreement with the state that he (Lager) would self-monitor ECOT enrollment. The self-monitoring allowed him to collect hundreds of millions illegally. Mr. Lager lined the campaign coffers of numerous state officials, many of whom are still in office.

The state should require the same regulation for the charter industry as it does for school districts, including a governance structure that makes the charters accountable to the public. Only school district boards of education should be authorized to sponsor charter schools. For-profit companies should not be authorized to operate charters.