

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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## Tennessee Charter School Reform Poll

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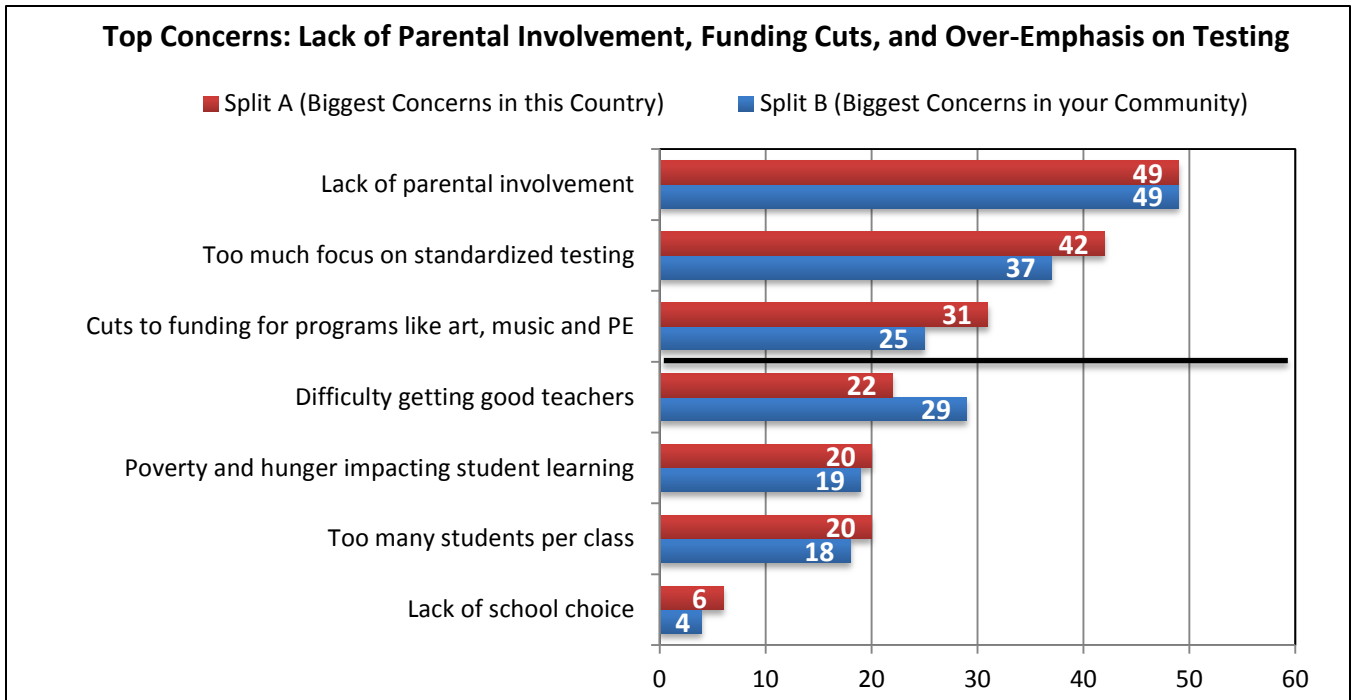
### Introduction

A new survey shows that Tennessee voters overwhelmingly favor a series of proposals to reform charter schools. Proposals garnering broad support include initiatives to strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, prevent fraud, and serve high-need students at the same levels as neighborhood public schools.

The following are key findings from the Tennessee poll of 500 registered voters, which was conducted January 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015:

### Key Findings

- **Voters have fairly positive views of their public schools and public school teachers.** Sixty-three percent of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood excellent or good, while just 31 percent rate them fair or poor. Voters are more likely to say public schools in their neighborhood are getting better (36 percent) than getting worse (17 percent), while a 38 percent plurality are not seeing much change either way. By more than 6:1, voters are more likely to have favorable than unfavorable views of public school teachers (64 percent favorable – 13 percent unfavorable).
- **Lack of school choice does not register as a top concern.** Voters focus on lack of parental involvement, too much focus on standardized tests, and cuts to school funding as the biggest problems facing K-through-12 education. Lack of school choice ranks dead last on their list of concerns.



- Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Huge majorities of voters favor proposals to strengthen transparency and accountability, teacher training and qualifications, anti-fraud measures, and ensuring high-need students are served at the same levels as neighborhood public schools.

	Total Support %
<b>Transparency &amp; Accountability</b>	
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to <b>open board meetings</b> to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings	<b>89</b>
Require state officials to conduct <b>regular audits</b> of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds	<b>86</b>
Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to release to parents and the public <b>how they spend taxpayer money</b> , including their annual budgets and contracts	<b>85</b>
<b>Preventing Harm to Neighborhood Schools</b>	
Before any new charter school is approved, conduct an <b>analysis of the impact</b> the school will have on neighborhood public schools	<b>78</b>
Ensure that <b>neighborhood public schools do not lose funding</b> when new charter schools open in their area	<b>78</b>

<b>Protect Taxpayer funds</b>	
Require charter schools to <b>return taxpayer money to the school district</b> for any student that leaves the charter school to return to a neighborhood public school during the school year	<b>78</b>
Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement	<b>69</b>
Prohibit charter school board members and their immediate families from <b>financially benefiting from their schools</b>	<b>65</b>
Prohibit charter schools from <b>spending taxpayer dollars on advertising or marketing</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Serving High Need Students</b>	
Require all teachers who work in taxpayer funded schools, including neighborhood public schools and charter schools, to meet the <b>same training and qualification requirements</b>	<b>89</b>
Require charter schools to <b>serve high-need students</b> such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools	<b>79</b>

### **Methodology**

GBA Strategies conducted a poll in Tennessee of 500 registered voters January 27-31, 2015 on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a Tennessee voter file and phone numbers were selected randomly, providing a statistically representative sample. The poll was administered by professional interviewers via telephone with respondents being reached on cell phones and landlines.