



Senator Langley, Representative Richardson and members of the Educational and Cultural Affairs committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee, and thank you Chairman Langley for taking quick action on this matter of charter school rules. My name is John Jaques, I am the Executive Director of Baxter Academies of Maine. We are a Maine based non-profit that has plans to open Maine's first STEM focused charter high school in Portland. As you may already be aware of, we are very excited about the facility at 54 York St. in downtown Portland, across the street from the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. We have been working very hard under the assumption that the intent of the legislation was to allow for the first charter school to begin operation in 2012, as this was posted on the Department of Education's web site. It is our sincere hope that charter school rules and authorization will move forward quickly here in Augusta.

I encourage you to pass charter school rules that will allow for this project to move forward and allow us to open to students in September 2012. We feel that this STEM charter school will be good for the state of Maine, and good for students in the greater Portland area. This legislation is about expanding school choice in Maine. Several aspects of the proposed rules cause us concern. In order for charter school to be successful we would need the following:

- Reasonable transportation rules, it is unreasonable to expect that we could provide transportation beyond a 25 mile radius of Portland without additional funds from the state
- Rolling admissions, at least in the first 3 years
- Allow charter schools to set the date for a lottery if one is needed, not an arbitrary date set here in Augusta. This will be very complicated due to the fact that we have available spots capped on a town by town, or SAU basis
- Set a date to for both RFP & authorization that will allow schools ready to open, to do so in 2012

Thank you very much for your interest and attention to these issues. I am open to questions.

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