

WEST VIRGINIA COMES IN LATE TO THE CHARTER SCHOOL BUSINESS, BUT WITH THE SAME SENSELESS RATIONALE

The WV Governor, pursuant to recently passed law in the state, appointed five members to the West Virginia Professional Charter School Board. One of the appointees, Adam Kissel, is a former deputy assistant secretary in the Betsy DeVos-led US Department of Education. Kissel is quoted in the August 13, 2021 Wheeling Intelligencer: “The core idea of public charter schools is that state regulations interfere with innovative options to help more kids.” He further said, “State regulations often end up hurting kids instead of helping them.”

Hello Mr. Kissel—if state regulations hurt kids, identify those nasty regs and lobby to repeal them, rather than starting another system of education.

West Virginia will be no different than all other states. Charters breed fraud and corruption, waste public resources, harm school districts, and will be inferior to the traditional public school system.

[With Little Fanfare, West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice Appoints Charter School Board Members | News, Sports, Jobs - The Intelligencer](#)

CHARLESTON — The list of appointees for a new statewide board that can authorize new public charter schools was released Thursday, with the group’s first meeting set for next week.

According to the West Virginia Secretary of State’s Office, Gov. Jim Justice appointed five people to the new West Virginia Professional Charter School Board. The appointments were all dated July 2. Justice’s office has made no public announcements about the appointments.

Appointees are: former Greater Beckley Christian School head boys basketball coach Brian Helton; John Waltz, the vice president for enrollment management at West Virginia Wesleyan College Upshur County; Dewayne Duncan, a real estate developer in Kanawha County and former Republican candidate for Kanawha County Commission; Karen Bailey-Chapman, owner of public relations firm KB Advocacy in Jefferson County and a board member of the libertarian Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy; and Adam Kissel, a senior fellow at the Cardinal Institute.

Kissel, a former deputy assistant secretary for higher education programs at the U.S. Department of Education for 16 months under former president Donald Trump, said he was excited to get to work on the new board.

“I’m looking forward to working with the rest of the board and state officials to bring high-quality charter schools to more kids around the state,” Kissel said.

The West Virginia Professional Charter School Board was created by the Legislature through House Bill 2012, passed during the 2021 regular session. The bill creates the Professional Charter School Board as one of four authorizers for charter school applications along with a county board of education, two county boards of education, and the state Board of Education under certain circumstances.

The Professional Charter School Board can also authorize up to two statewide virtual charter schools, which can enroll no more than 5% of statewide headcount enrollment each school year. Public charter schools authorized by the new board are only subject to supervision by the state Board of Education when it comes to meeting standards for student performance.

Besides the five appointed members, the Professional Charter School Board consists of the chairs of the House and state Senate education committees as non-voting members. Terms for the appointed members are staggered in one-year and two-year terms, though all future appointments will be for two-year terms.

State Code required all members to be appointed by Aug. 1 with the first meeting held as soon as practical after Aug. 1. The first meeting is scheduled for 2 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 18, in Building 7 on the State Capitol grounds.

Kissel said the meeting will be to vote for the board's chairman and adopt bylaws. But future meetings will quickly work to implement that state's public charter school pilot program. Public charter schools are part of the public school system but are free to try new approaches to education and learning while free from some of the same regulations public schools follow.

"The core idea of public charter schools is that state regulations interfere with innovative options that help more kids," Kissel said. "Every kid needs a high-quality school that fits the child's unique circumstances that can transform that child's life, but state regulations often end up hurting kids instead of helping them. We have a chance to bring more innovative options to more students."

HB 2012 was built on the back of House Bill 206, an omnibus education bill passed during a contentious special session in 2019. HB 2012 expanded the maximum number of public charter schools in a three-year period from three to 10 schools and allows statewide and county virtual charter schools with an enrollment cap of 10% of total county public school enrollment.

One of the first applications the board could review is from the West Virginia Academy, a group of parents who want to start a public charter school for the Monongalia and Preston County areas. Both counties denied an application from the West Virginia Academy last year, resulting in a lawsuit brought against the Department of Education. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals rejected the lawsuit.

In a blog post earlier this week, West Virginia Academy board chairman John Treu, a professor at West Virginia University, said his board plans to apply to the Professional Charter School Board for authorization, with plans to open a nursery, primary and secondary school in the fall of 2022.

Speaking during public remarks for Wednesday's state school board meeting, West Virginia Education Association President Dale Lee said the public charter schools and the new Hope Scholarship education savings account program will divert funding away from public schools.

"It bothers me that we're going to be taking away from public education here soon," Lee said. "We should all be fighting for all of the students of West Virginia and for a great public education and not dividing. It's time for us to stand up, fight for our kids who sometimes get lost, and make sure that this year that every opportunity is available to them."