



CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION IN MISSOURI TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILLS 1485, 1764, 1941

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January 2024



This policy brief is adapted from testimony prepared for the Missouri House of Representative Special Committee on Education Reform. PRiME Center Executive Director Collin Hitt appeared before the committee in January 2024, as part of the Center's mission to provide policymakers with timely analysis and data on key education policy issues.

Testimony

Missouri House of Representatives Special Committee on Education Reform
Rep. Bishop Davis, Chair
January 17, 2024

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for your time.

I am Collin Hitt, Executive Director of the Saint Louis University Center for Policy Research in Missouri Education—more commonly known as the PRiME Center. Our motto is, “Better Data. Better Policies. Better Schools.”

I am here today to provide information-only testimony on **House Bills 1485, 1764, and 1941** which, if passed, would likely lead to the creation of charter schools in St. Charles, St. Louis, and Boone Counties.

As this committee is aware, current law and practice largely confines charter schools to Kansas City and St. Louis city.

Table 1: Charter School Legislation Before the Committee

House Bill	Description
1485	“This bill allows for charter schools to be established in any school district located primarily in a county with more than one million inhabitants. Currently this would apply to St. Louis County. The bill also allows for the funding mechanism for charter schools to include any newly established charters.”
1764	“This bill allows for charter schools to be established in any school district located primarily in a county with more than 400,000 but fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. Upon enactment this would apply to St. Charles County. The bill also allows for the funding mechanism for charter schools to include any newly established charter schools.”
1941	“This bill expands the current limits on where charter schools may be operated without local school board sponsorship to include any school district that contains the city of Columbia.”

Source: Official bill summaries from www.house.mo.gov

It is worthwhile to know if the public would support expanding charter schools beyond their current limits. In public policy, especially in a representative democracy, it is important to gauge public opinion on key matters. For this reason, the PRiME Center commissions polling on key questions surrounding public education.

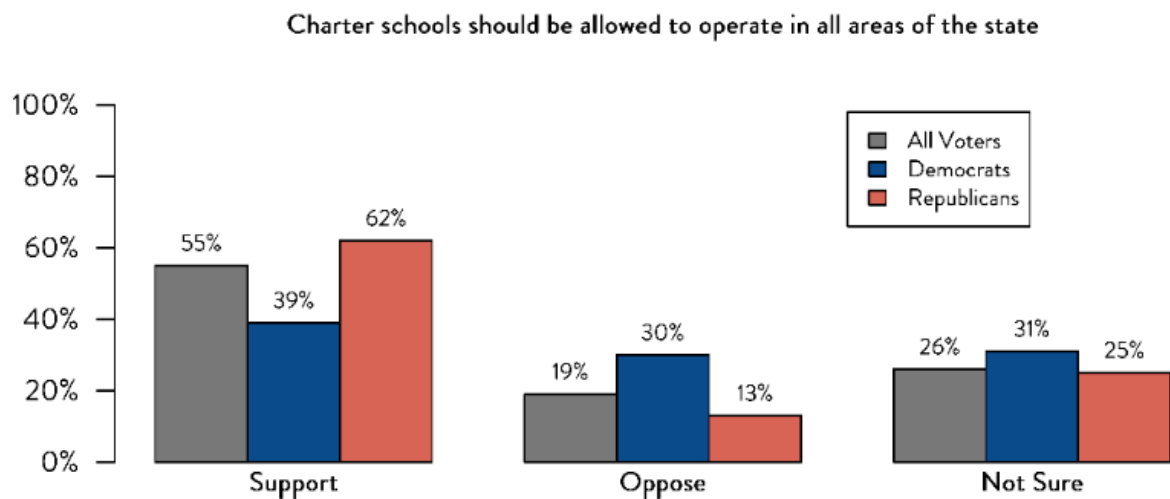
Since 2020, the PRiME Center has provided the primary support for the SLU/YouGov Poll, a regular poll of approximately 900 likely voters in Missouri on politics and public policy.

The poll is directed by a committee of leading faculty and staff, is vetted by the university's institutional review board, and is conducted by YouGov, a world-renowned polling and public opinion research firm.

Since 2021, the SLU/YouGov poll has asked Missouri voters, "Do you support or oppose the following policies...Charter schools should be allowed to operate in all areas of the state?"

Exhibit 1

Missouri voter attitudes on statewide expansion of charter schools



July 27 to August 8, 2023; 900 Likely Missouri Voters; MoE $\pm 4.02\%$

SLU POLL | **YouGov**
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY. www.slu.edu/poll

The majority of voters have consistently said yes, they support such a policy. This question was asked most recently in the August 2023 SLU/YouGov poll: 55% Support this statement, 19% Oppose, and 26% were Not Sure.

This result has been remarkably stable and consistent over the life of the SLU/YouGov poll: support for this question outweighs opposition by nearly 3-to-1, sometimes more.

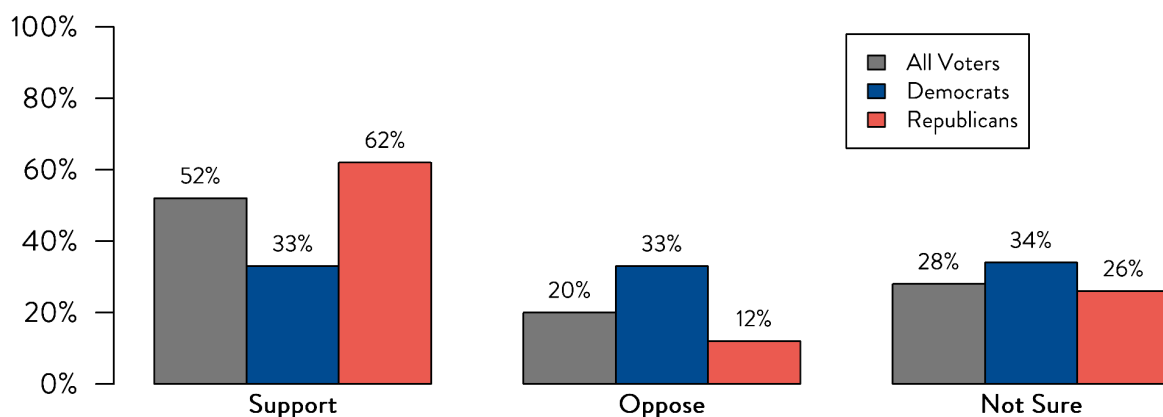
These responses should be informative to the committee, while recognizing that the legislation before you today does not expand charter schools to “all areas of the state,” per se, only to certain counties.

We have additional polling data that is more precise to the point. In the most recent SLU/YouGov Poll, voters were asked another question that was extremely relevant: “Do you support or oppose the following policies...Charter schools should be allowed to operate in my school district?” Support outweighs opposition by more than 2-to-1. 52% of Missouri voters think charter schools should be allowed to operate in their school districts, while 20% are opposed, and 28% are Not Sure.

Exhibit 2

Missouri voter attitudes on charter schools operating in their school districts

Charter schools should be allowed to operate in my school district



July 27 to August 8, 2023; 900 Likely Missouri Voters; MoE ±4.02%

SLU POLL | YouGov
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY.
www.slu.edu/poll

In the St. Louis Metropolitan area, german to two of the pieces of legislation we are now discussing, 54 percent support this statement, while 21 percent are opposed. While our polling does not allow us to zoom in on Boone County specifically, no region of the state significantly differs from the statewide results, with support more than double the opposition. (See Appendix B for full cross-tabs.)

We hope these polling numbers are useful to the committee. We thank you for your time. The PRiME Center and Saint Louis University will be going into the field with a series of parent, teacher and voter polls this Spring. If these surveys can be of use to this committee in its important work, we stand ready to provide public analysis of these and other key data in education policy.

Again, thank you.

Further Discussion

At the January 17 hearing of the House Special Committee on Education Reform, much of the polling data above was separately cited by proponents of House Bills 1485, 1764, and 1941. It is not hard to see why. Polls show that Missouri voters favor the policies set forth in the legislation.

As the PRiME Center said to the committee on that day, we would be presenting our polling results to the committee, even if we had found the opposite, that Missouri voters broadly opposed the expansion of charter schools. But that is not the case. Among Missouri voters, support for expanding charter schools far outweighs opposition.

We follow the data. The PRiME Center and Saint Louis University, in partnership with YouGov, poll prolifically on education policy matters. In 2024, the next installments of the SLU/YouGov poll will be released in the Spring and Fall—education topics will be a major focus. The PRiME Center will also release its second regional Parent Poll, in partnership with the University of Arkansas, a Missouri Teacher Poll, and a national Young Person’s Poll.

These will provide key and novel insights into how Missourians feel about the state of education policy today. The PRiME Center will make these data regularly available to parents, educators and policymakers.

Appendix A

About the SLU/YouGov Poll



August 2023 Saint Louis University/YouGov Poll Results

Steven Rogers	Kenneth Warren	Ashley Burle	Gary Ritter
SLU/YouGov Poll	SLU/YouGov Poll	SLU/YouGov Poll	SLU/YouGov Poll
Director	Associate Director	Associate Director	Executive Sponsor
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Saint Louis University and YouGov surveyed 900 likely Missouri voters from July 27 to August 08 about current political issues, gun policy, and education policy in Missouri. The following pages present results for most survey questions. The margin of error for survey results for the full sample is 4.02%. Margins of error for questions asked to subsamples are listed below. Original data and analyses from the SLU Poll Directors are available at <http://www.slu.edu/poll>.

Funding and Support

The Saint Louis University PRiME Center provided the majority of funding for the SLU/YouGov Poll. The origins of the SLU/YouGov Poll lie in an internal Big Ideas competition to define university-wide strategic research priorities sponsored by the Saint Louis University Research Institute. The Big Ideas competition provides funding to research initiatives that demonstrate broad faculty engagement, strong leadership and compelling research plans.

Appendix B

Full results and cross-tabs for questions discussed in preceding testimony.

Do you support or oppose the following policies...Charter schools should be allowed to operate in all areas of the state?										
Response	Full Result	Gender		Age				Race		
		Men	Women	18 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 64	65+	Whites	Blacks	All Non-whites
Support	55%	56%	54%	54%	52%	54%	58%	54%	57%	60%
Oppose	19%	20%	18%	11%	21%	21%	19%	21%	4%	10%
Not Sure	26%	24%	28%	36%	28%	25%	23%	26%	39%	30%
Unweighted N	900	365	535	87	160	326	327	797	59	103

Response	Party			Income		
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Below \$50k	Btwn. \$50k and \$100k	Above \$100k
Support	39%	62%	63%	53%	55%	55%
Oppose	30%	13%	17%	14%	22%	29%
Not Sure	31%	25%	20%	33%	23%	16%
Unweighted N	314	282	252	330	301	195

Response	Education				Region					
	High School	Some Col.	4-Year Col.	Post-Grad	StL	KC	NW MO	NE MO	SW MO	SE MO
Support	51%	59%	60%	45%	58%	49%	42%	56%	56%	58%
Oppose	15%	18%	19%	34%	20%	24%	22%	15%	20%	11%
Not Sure	34%	23%	22%	21%	22%	27%	37%	29%	25%	31%
Unweighted N	216	299	221	164	291	185	48	111	181	82

Do you support or oppose the following policies...Charter schools should be allowed to operate in my school district?										
Response	Full Result	Gender		Age				Race		
		Men	Women	18 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 64	65+	Whites	Blacks	All Non-whites
Support	52%	54%	50%	53%	48%	50%	56%	53%	39%	47%
Oppose	20%	20%	20%	9%	21%	23%	20%	21%	12%	16%
Not Sure	28%	26%	30%	38%	31%	27%	24%	27%	49%	37%
Unweighted N	900	365	535	87	160	326	327	797	59	103

Response	Party			Income		
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	Below \$50k	Btwn. \$50k and \$100k	Above \$100k
Support	33%	62%	61%	48%	54%	55%
Oppose	33%	12%	17%	14%	23%	28%
Not Sure	34%	26%	22%	38%	22%	17%
Unweighted N	314	282	252	330	301	195

Response	Education				Region					
	High School	Some Col.	4-Year Col.	Post-Grad	StL	KC	NW MO	NE MO	SW MO	SE MO
Support	47%	58%	55%	45%	54%	48%	43%	56%	51%	52%
Oppose	15%	19%	19%	36%	21%	24%	23%	16%	19%	14%
Not Sure	38%	23%	26%	20%	25%	28%	33%	28%	30%	34%
Unweighted N	216	299	221	164	291	185	48	111	181	82

Who we are

The Policy Research in Missouri Education (PRiME) Center is a non-partisan research center housed in the Saint Louis University School of Education. Opened in the Spring of 2019, we are wholly committed to conducting and sharing research that leads to better policies, educational outcomes, and opportunities for all students.

What we do

We conduct and share research on education. We help lawmakers, educators, and families in the state of Missouri make decisions about education policy and practice. Our mission is to ensure that the people making decisions and building policies around education have the relevant data and evidence they need to build the best and most equitable educational systems possible.

About the Authors

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PRiME CENTER

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Better evidence, better policy, better schools

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