

# PIEDMONT POST

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## VIEWPOINT

### Charter School Task Force has recommendations

By Sheila Jordan

Last winter I formed a 21-member Charter School Policy Task Force comprised of individuals on both sides of the charter debate: charter experts, parents, educational leaders and labor leaders, to examine and analyze the conflicts between charter schools and school districts.

The Task Force goal was to make recommendations for legislation and changes in policy that will pave the way for an improved co-existence between charters and other public schools. These conflicts arise around issues of funding, conflicting state policies, and the lack of a clear understanding of the role of charter schools in public education.

As County Superintendent, conflicts in state law are also of concern to me. I am required under Assembly Bill 1200 to approve a district's budget as fis-

cally sound, knowing full well that a new charter may destabilize it. This is at odds with state law that requires the approval of a qualifying charter school application even when the charter will negatively impact a struggling district's budget.

Behind every charter petition are enthusiastic, dedicated, and hopeful parents. This desire for school choice has been driving the rapid growth in charter schools. The impact of state budget cuts on districts, as well as the Federal NCLB mandates, have added to the momentum.

After six months of hard work and tough negotiations, consensus was reached on recommendations that will require specific strategies and actions over the coming months. Those recommendations include meeting with State Superintendent of Schools Jack O'Connell to discuss imple-

menting a review to determine if current financing formulas and mechanisms of charters and other public schools are equitable and asking law makers to sponsor legislation that would incorporate the Task Force's suggestions.

Woven throughout the report are repeated calls for improved funding of public education, which I heartily endorse. Improved finances for all public schools – whether district or charter – will address the feelings of scarcity and need shared by all sides, and will provide resources for equitable quality education for all students.

I expect the Task Force report to stimulate policy review, new legislation, and a new paradigm for thinking about public education and the role of charter schools.

I welcome your thoughts and responses.

To view the report see [www.acoe.org/charters](http://www.acoe.org/charters).

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