

John R. Kasich, Governor
Dr. Richard A. Ross, Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 16, 2014

Dear Charter School Authorizer,

Authorizers must verify to the Department of Education that certain aspects of charter school operations are in place prior to school opening. This process, called “authorizer opening assurances,” is detailed in state law and rule (see [ORC 3314.19](#) and [OAC 3301-102-05](#)).

The opening assurances process is meant to ensure that every charter school environment complies with the most important of health and safety regulations and that the school begins its year meeting minimal expectations for academic, operational and fiscal performance.

Opening assurances also reflect the overall quality of your practices as a charter authorizer. The failure to submit completed assurances at least ten business days prior to school opening can lead to the Department withdrawing the authority to open new schools. (see [ORC Sections 3314.016 \(A\)\(1\)](#) and [3316.015 \(C\)](#)).

But beyond this, authorizers in the past have submitted opening assurances that incompletely or inaccurately represented a school’s opening environment and functional capacity. When this has happened, the boys and girls in these schools have lost out on the safety net of oversight that authorizers are supposed to be providing them and the charter sector.

Significant issues with incomplete and inaccurate opening assurances can reflect a lack of sufficient commitment or capacity, or both, on the part of the authorizer in carrying out their responsibilities.

For that reason, one change made this year is that the signature of the chair of the authorizer’s governing board is now required on each opening assurance. This is an indicator that your organization’s full commitment to high standards in charter oversight backs up the assurances you are making to the Department about each charter school.

We understand the logistical challenges to accomplishing this, especially for statewide authorizers. Authorizers will have the option of providing assurances signed by the agency representative along with a commitment to secure the board chair’s signature in a timely fashion. For this option, the assurances issued each calendar month with only an authorizer representative signature and without a board chair signature need to be provided to ODE revised with the board chair signature by the 15th of the following month.

Other changes, particularly in certain compliance reviews, are consistent with the duty of authorizers to minimize administrative burdens of their charter schools.

Finally, this year you may use the ODE Document Exchange in your SAFE account to upload your assurance documents. This should eliminate concerns about whether your submissions have been received by the Office of Community Schools.

The “2014-2015 Authorizer Opening Assurance Form” is attached and can be accessed on our website by clicking [here](#). For more information on this year’s opening assurances, please contact your lead consultant.

Best regards,



David Hansen, Executive Director
Office of Quality School Choice