United action against charter schools action

On Oct. 11 the State University of New York Board of Trustees Charter School Committee abandoned some of the children in New York. That’s the day when the committee voted to change the standards on deciding who can teach in some charter schools.

“This is a denial of what teaching is all about,” said SUNY University Faculty Senate President Gwen Kay. “For years we have strived to increase the standards that teachers must meet and this action by the committee simply ignores us and undercuts us. We are the experts in teacher education, not politicians.”

Establishing a less demanding way to become a teacher does not help any students or school in the long run, Kay added. And that’s why the New York State United Teachers union has filed a lawsuit against the measure. In addition, the speaker of the state Assembly, the chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee, the commissioner of the state Education Department, and the chancellor of the state Board of Regents, among others, have criticized and condemned the committee proposal.

It’s also why UFS is taking action. A resolution passed by the UFS at its fall plenary in October at SUNY Delhi specifically mentioned the years it took to get TeachNY up and running. TeachNY established more rigorous standards for teachers in public schools across the state.

Also, the faculty senates at various SUNY colleges endorsed the UFS resolution critical of the charter school teacher preparation policy. To date, this resolution has been endorsed by the campus governance organizations at Brockport, Canton, Cobleskill, Empire State and SUNY Poly’s Governance Council.

UFS fears that the less-demanding standards for teachers in some charter schools not only fails to meet external accreditation standards, but is also a political ploy designed and quick-fix scheme to ease teacher shortages at some charter schools. And that is essentially cheating the students in those schools.

That’s why the resolution asks SUNY’s board to reject its own committee’s proposed new regulations at its November board meeting.

The University Faculty Senate is a deliberative body that serves as a resource on educational policies. It is comprised of representatives from each of the 31 state-operated campuses.