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It's tempting to get excited about Robert Bobb's new short-term solution for the financial and academic woes of Detroit Public Schools. But there are significant drawbacks to the proposal from the DPS emergency financial manager.

Rather than shutter scores more buildings and stuff more kids into fewer classrooms, Bobb now suggests turning 41 schools into charters. This, he says, would save money and infuse the system with new, innovative educational energy.

In theory. On paper. Maybe.

But it is a short-term fix as opposed to a long-term strategy for the future of public education in Detroit -- a future that depends on leadership after Bobb. And that leadership has yet to emerge.

Until that happens, there is no point in even contemplating short-term fixes. There is nothing that makes it any more rewarding an exercise than shuffling seat assignments on a nose-diving plane.

Bobb's plan would effectively get DPS out from under the burden of 41 schools that are failing academically and financially, turning them over to well-established charter operators.

The plan would remove an estimated \$90 million in maintenance, administration and other costs from DPS, and create a revenue stream by leasing the buildings to the charters.

The charter operators would install academic reforms that would boost student performance in the buildings.

Sounds promising, but there are also a lot of questions.

On the financial side, DPS would lose its per-pupil state aid for the students in those 41 schools, an estimated \$120 million. Even if the charters' lease payments covered the \$30-million gap between financial savings and lost state aid, it doesn't cut into the DPS deficit.

Academically, the massive charter plan is weak. Overall, charter schools have been a hit-and-miss experiment in Michigan, and especially in Detroit.

The best ones -- schools that have high retention and graduation rates and solid test scores -- have rigorous academic models that take a while to design and construct.

It's nearly April, and Bobb wants his plan to launch in September. No high-performing charter operator would accept a challenge to take over a school on such short notice. Those likely to jump at the chance are also likely to be those who are less focused on, and less capable of, producing excellence.

Detroit has plenty of underperforming charter schools now; it doesn't need 41 more in September.

Bobb's plan also presents a massive challenge in scale. Even if he were to entice six charter school operators, they would each be overseeing six or more schools by September.

No charter system in Detroit right now could ramp up that quickly. A national charter operator with no presence in the city would be starting from scratch to meet that formidable challenge, a very unlikely proposition -- not to mention risky for charter operators with good records they'd like to maintain.

Bobb's plan simply asks for too much too quickly, and would result in a lot of unnecessary rushing

and chaos -- all for a short-term fix.

It makes more sense for everyone with an interest in building a better public education future in Detroit to focus on the inevitable: the fact that DPS is insolvent and can be salvaged only with a massive, long-term turnaround plan.

That plan needs to eradicate the system's debts and then create a sustainable system. That new system might well include lots of charter schools, but they will need time to develop and build. The state will also need a way to manage performance in those charters, and ensure that good schools flourish and bad ones are not left to linger.

That is more managing than the state does now in any jurisdiction, so a lot of planning and infrastructure building needs to take place before a plan is launched for Detroit.

And there remains that nagging issue of leadership -- a critical hurdle.

It is tragic that Detroiters have had to wait for so long for local leaders to step forward with a plan to move past the DPS mess. It is just as sad that the most innovative plans to date have come from Bobb, who is a temporary steward.

Time for Bobb to take a rest. And for every other leader in Detroit to take the helm in guiding the city toward a better day in public education.