

October 17, 2016

Dear Members of the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Los Angeles Advocacy Council, a 17-member committee of charter public school leaders and the broader community of 64 charter organizations listed below, representing 196 public schools serving 94,595 students in Los Angeles.

We are proud to partner with the District in our shared effort to strengthen learning for all students. We are proud of our academic results, which have made us perhaps the highest performing charter community in the country, particularly with high-need students. We are proud that these results were achieved with both charter schools and District officials remaining committed to strengthening our working relationship, even through difficult times.

Given how far we've come together, it is distressing and quite simply unacceptable that District staff have taken unexpected and unprecedented steps to close some of our higher performing academic schools and prevent others from continuing to serve the students who already rely on them.

We are deeply concerned that this month District staff have recommended more charter renewal and material revision denials than they have in the last five years combined, none of which are based on student outcomes. The Board's votes on Tuesday have the potential to disrupt the lives of over 13,000 students attending schools operated by our peers. The October staff recommendations represent a fundamental and drastic departure from the Charter School Division's expressed values of consistency and transparency, and the District's historic focus on student outcomes as an authorizer.

Consistency

On an annual basis, each of our organizations embrace accountability, interacting regularly with District staff, undergoing rigorous and thorough oversight visits, and providing detailed academic, financial, and governance information to LAUSD. These processes exist precisely so that staff and families know where our schools stand, and naturally, we expect that staff recommendations on our petitions are consistent with the results of ongoing oversight. In fact, the California Department of Education (CDE) asserts that **"an authorizer's renewal policy and framework should ensure that no school is ever surprised by a non-renewal recommendation."** In the case of many of Tuesday's denial recommendations, schools have been blindsided by recommendations for denials, backed by negative reports that are completely inconsistent with years of positive oversight visits and student achievement. Our students, families, teachers and staff deserve more than haphazard final judgments on their fates.

Transparency

The CDE also states that: **"Transparency in the charter renewal process can protect the authorizer from political pressure."** Transparent authorizing means alerting schools that their actions, if not corrected, could be grounds for denial or non-renewal. Transparent authorizing first identifies problems and then provides schools with ample opportunity to solve those problems, particularly when issues are fixable. Such transparency, however, has been virtually absent for our peers who are being recommended for denial or revocation. Only one of them has received a Notice of Violation, which is commonly accepted as the first step toward a possible closure, many months after issues were identified and the school was under the impression they had been working in good faith to address them. The rest

have been operating without indication from the District that they are in violation of policies that would warrant non-renewal or denial. Our students, families, teachers and staff deserve to know that their schools are subject to transparent oversight that affords schools the opportunity to fix issues and address concerns before the threat of closure or denial, especially when issues are not related to student outcomes.

Student Outcomes

The CDE, in detailing the standards that must be used to evaluate charter school renewals, states that **“improved pupil academic achievement for all pupils is the first priority of California charter schools.”** The law rightly insists that if schools are yielding academic progress for their students, they should continue to do so. The charter community is committed to accountability, which is precisely why we call for the non-renewal of charter organizations each year who are not delivering academic outcomes. The schools seeking renewal and material revisions have achieved notable gains with their students on internal and publicly available academic achievement and growth measures, graduation rates, college-going rates, and other key indicators, making this criteria particularly fundamental. By these measures, there is little, if any, question that every charter school recommended for denial on Tuesday should be approved. Our students, families, teachers and staff deserve to know that schools delivering student achievement and growth will be supported and protected by their authorizer.

If the District is willing to close academically high performing schools largely because of technical and operational issues that either have been corrected or can be fixed, then who’s to say whether our own schools will be next? If the District is determined to deny innovative and impactful charters the opportunity to simply continue serving the students who already attend their schools, then how can we trust that the District prizes quality education and student success above all else?

These recommended denials and revocations threaten the basic values and expectations that we’ve held onto as partners with the District, even in the most challenging times: accountability and collaboration based on consistency, transparency, and a focus on student outcomes. Most importantly, these recommended denials and revocations threaten the futures of thousands of students who have sought out these schools for an unassailable reason: they provide an education that meets their unique needs.

We urge you, the Board, to make decisions based first and foremost on the interests of students and families, an approach that enabled you to authorize one of the strongest and most respected charter school sectors in the nation. We urge you to overturn the denial recommendations of our peers.

Respectfully,



Johnathan Williams
Executive Director
The Accelerated Schools
2 schools serving 1100 students



Dan Katzir
President and CEO
Alliance College-Ready Public Schools
25 schools serving 12000 students



Xavier Reyes
Founder and CEO
Alta Public Schools
2 schools serving 850 students



Alfonso Paz and Cesar Lopez
Co-Directors
APEX Academy
1 school serving 400 students



Laurie Inman
Chief Executive & Academic Officer
Apple Academy
1 school serving 325 students



Kate Ford
Area Superintendent, Los Angeles
Aspire Public Schools
9 schools serving 3500 students



Bill Parks, Jr.
CEO and Principal
Birmingham Community Charter High School
1 school serving 3260 students



Hrag Hamalian
Executive Director
Bright Star Schools
7 schools serving 2500 students



Sue Andres-Brown
Founding Head of School
California Collegiate Charter School
1 school serving 80 students



Ana Ponce
Chief Executive Officer
Camino Nuevo Charter Academy
6 schools serving 3300 students



Grace Canada
Chief Executive Officer
Celerity Education Group
6 schools serving 3100 students



Chris Bright
Executive Director
CHAMPS Charter High School for the Arts
1 school serving 800 students



Erin Studer
Executive Director
CHIME
1 school serving 750 students



Valerie Braimah
Executive Director
City Charter Schools
2 schools serving 650 students



Vanessa Jackson
Head of School
Collegiate Charter High School
1 school serving 100 students



Mark Kleger-Heine
Executive Director
Citizens of the World- Los Angeles
3 schools serving 1300 students



Karen Smith
Principal
Discovery Charter Preparatory #2
1 school serving 250 students



Oliver Sicat
CEO
Ednivate
2 schools serving 650 students



Jon Wasser
Board President
El Camino Charter High School
1 school serving 3800 students



Ted Morris
Co-Founder
Endeavor College Preparatory
1 school serving 600 students



Malka Borrego
Founder and CEO
Equitas Academy Charter Schools
3 school serving 900 students



Jim Kennedy
Chief Executive Officer
Extera Public Schools
2 schools serving 800 students



Irene Sumida
Executive Director
Fenton Charter Public Schools
5 schools serving 2800 students



Carrie Wagner
Executive Director
GALS Los Angeles
1 school serving 100 students



Sally Chou
Executive Director
Global Education Collaborative
3 schools serving 450 students



Parker Hudnut
Chief Executive Officer
ICEF Public Schools
7 schools serving 2750 students



Yolanda Jimenez
Principal
Los Angeles Academy of Arts and Enterprise
1 school serving 400 students



Josh Stock
Executive Director
Lashon Academy
1 school serving 200 students



Caprice Young
Chief Executive Officer
Magnolia Public Schools
8 schools serving 2750 students



Amy Berfield
Executive Director
New Heights Charter School
1 school serving 440 students



Mark Ryan
Executive Director
North Valley Military Academy
1 school serving 500 students



Cristina de Jesus
President and CEO
Green Dot Public Schools California
17 schools serving 9800 students



Myranda Marsh
Executive Director
James Jordan Middle School
1 school serving 400 students



Arina Goldring
Executive Director
Los Angeles Leadership Academy
2 schools serving 900 students



Anna Carlstone-Hurt
Founder and Head of School
Libertas College Prep
1 school serving 100 students



Gayle Nadler
Executive Director
Multicultural Learning Center
1 school serving 400 students



Richard Thomas
Executive Director
New Horizons Charter School
1 school serving 250 students



Lynn Izakowitz
Executive Director
Our Community School
1 school serving 450 students



Marsha Rybin
Founding Principal
High Tech High LA
1 school serving 400 students



Marcia Aaron
Executive Director
KIPP LA
13 schools serving 5000 students



Amy Held
Executive Director
Larchmont Charter Academy
1 school serving 1500 students



Linda Lee
Executive Director/Principal
Los Feliz Charter School for the Arts
1 school serving 500 students



Patricia Gould
Principal
New Academy Canoga Park
1 school serving 500 students



Matt Albert
Executive Director
New Los Angeles Charter Schools
2 schools serving 425 students



Sylvia Fajardo
Executive Director
Pacoima Charter School
1 school serving 1350 students

palisades charter high school

Pamela Magee
Principal and Executive Director
Palisades Charter High School
1 school serving 3000 students



Martine Singer
President and CEO
Para Los Ninos
3 schools serving 1100 students



Erica Hamilton
Executive Director
Pathways Community School
1 school serving 200 students



Tom Scotti
Executive Director
Port of Los Angeles High School
1 school serving 1000 students



Sonali Tucker
Executive Director
Public Policy Charter School
1 school serving 100 students



Jacqueline Elliot
Co-Founder
PUC Schools
12 schools serving 5000 students



PK Candaux and Sidnie Myrick
Co-Founders
Renaissance Arts Academy
2 schools serving 400 students



Natasha Barriga
Founder and Head of School
Resolute Academy Charter School
1 school serving 100 students



Emilio Pack
Executive Director
STEM Preparatory Schools
2 schools serving 900 students



Arianna Haut
Founder and Head of School
Summit Preparatory Charter School
1 school serving 75 students



Meg Palisoc
Executive Director
Synergy Academies
3 schools serving 1400 students



Raul Carranza
Principal
TEACH Public Schools
2 schools serving 450 students



Robert Burke
Executive Director
Valley Charter Schools
2 schools serving 500 students



Gerry Jacoby
Executive Director
Value Schools
4 schools serving 1250 students



Anita Zepeda
Executive Director
Vaughn Next Century Learning Center
1 school serving 3180 students



Don Wilson
Superintendent
Vista Charter Public Schools
1 school serving 420 students



Gene Fisher
Executive Director
Watts Learning Center Charter Schools
2 schools serving 750 students



Shawna Draxton
Executive Director
WISH Charter Schools
2 schools serving 700 students



Yvette King-Berg
Executive Director
YPI Charter Schools
3 schools serving 800 students

