



THE OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

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Submitted October 13, 2022, for the October 18, 2022 Quarterly Commission Meeting

Dear Members of the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission:

First, Memphis-Shelby County Schools (“MSCS”) MSCS would like to recognize the thorough planning and execution of the Tennessee Public Charter Commission staff and Commission members throughout a robust appellate cycle, while also engaging in the Commission’s normal authorizing duties. MSCS appreciates the commitment of the team to upholding the Tennessee Quality Charter Authorizing Standards and ensuring transparent practices throughout the process.

MSCS believes in transparent standards for our charter schools based on the Tennessee Quality Charter Authorizing Standards. As an authorizer, we use this as our rubric to ensure consistency and equality in meeting the appropriate standards for approval and authorization. MSCS’ authorization processes were recently reviewed by the Tennessee State Board, and out of a possible 4 points MSCS earned a 3.5. The appellate cycle and the recommendation from the Executive Director affirm our standard of review to ensure a fair and rigorous process for all our applicants.

As an authorizer, MSCS wants to ensure that these fair practices are implemented for strong outcomes in our communities. Principle 1 of the Tennessee Quality Authorizing Standards states, “A quality authorizer. . . [s]ets high, but attainable standards for approving charter applicants.” Standard 2 states that “A quality authorizer. . . grants charters only to applicants who demonstrate strong capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.” The rigorous review and approval are based on the Tennessee Department of Education’s (“TDOE”) Application and Rubric, in which an applicant must meet or exceed standards in each of the required sections.

In following the TDOE scoring rubric, MSCS determined that Tennessee Volunteer Military Academy (“TVMA”) did not provide evidence of capacity in the required academic, operational, and financial sections, and, thus, did not meet the standards for approval. Specifically, as noted by the Executive Director’s report, the absence of evidence is demonstrated in the academic section, where questions remain as to the lack of plan for students with disabilities and the lack of evidence for community demand; in the financial plan, where questions remain as to its funding and budgeting plan; and in the operational plan, where questions remain as to the relationship between TVMA and Charter One.

This application process and subsequent appellate review by the Commission reaffirms that MSCS has provided a strong application process that directly aligns with the required standard of review. As an authorizer, it is MSCS’ responsibility to ensure that the plan articulated in the proposed charter school’s application can be executed to fidelity to provide strong outcomes for students. In the case of TVMA, the application does not meet standards in each of the three sections and the school is not positioned to open successfully without significant revisions and clarifications in their academic, operations, and financials plans.

Memphis-Shelby County Schools appreciates the Commission’s time and respectfully requests that the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission uphold the Executive Director’s recommendation to affirm the Shelby County Board of Education’s decision to deny the charter application for Tennessee Volunteer Military Academy.

Sincerely,

Brittany Monda
Assistant Superintendent of Charter Schools