



THE OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

160 South Hollywood Street, Room 138 • Memphis, Tennessee 38112
901-416-5321 • www.scsk12.org/charter

Submitted October 4, 2023, for the October 6, 2023 Quarterly Commission Meeting

Dear Members of the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission:

First, Memphis-Shelby County Schools (“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. 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 Cornerstone Prep Lester (“CPL”) provided sufficient evidence of capacity in the academic, operational, and financial sections, but insufficient evidence of capacity in the Past Performance section, and, thus, only partially met the standard for approval. Additionally, as noted by MSCS and the Executive Director’s report, CPL has not achieved priority exit status within its charter term.

While we respect the recommendation of the Executive Director, we disagree. CPL has been a part of the Achievement School District for a full term and has not moved off of the priority school list. The Achievement School District was meant to serve as an intervention to students and the community, and at this time this school site as an intervention has not been successful.

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 CPL, the application partially meets standard in the Past Performance section and the school is not positioned to open successfully as a charter seeking authorization by the home LEA.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brittany Monda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brittany Monda
Assistant Superintendent of Charter Schools