



May 27, 2016

Ms. Jennifer Nagourney
Director, Charter School Office
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street
Dover, Delaware 19901

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Dear Ms. Nagourney:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the initial report of the Charter School Accountability Committee issued on May 12, 2016. The Delaware STEM Academy feels that it is a fair representation of the discussion at the May 10th meeting. We would like to address a number of issues that were brought out during the discussion but, more importantly, provide the CSAC with our reasons why we can successfully move forward with the school.

First, we have taken seriously the CSAC's concerns about financial viability at lower enrollment figures. Upon further review, we agree that lowering costs in major areas and lowering our revenue expectations are wise. Therefore, we have successfully negotiated lower contractual obligations in management fees with Innovative Schools and New Tech Network and in facility rentals. We are also in the process of securing a line of credit to assist with cash flow in the first and second years. As a result, we have lowered our fund raising estimates and have provided a more conservative approach to funding our school. We have included three budget scenarios at 105 students (May 1 count), 123 students (our current count), 135 students and 160 students, each of which has been sized to demonstrate financial viability.

Second, we continue to pursue an aggressive marketing effort (detailed in the attachment), including digital marketing and door-to-door enrollment efforts. We have a substantial number of students who are registered but not yet officially enrolled. By securing a number of these enrollments we will continue to strengthen our opening year projections. Likewise, we are holding more open houses and events to spur new enrollees.

Third, our parents and students are fully engaged in support of our school. A number of them have submitted public comments and are working with us to secure more like-minded students for the school. We have had very few withdrawals since the beginning of the formal review period. Students and parents are very excited about the school and are looking forward to helping with its opening. We will be providing sample letters, video and pictures of students in action as part of the public hearing process.

Fourth, external support has been tremendous. We continue to secure corporate and individual financial support. Many of these supporters have contributed comments in support of the school. We also have added a new member to our board - Brian McGlinchey, an associate with McCarter Government

Services- and are in the process of adding another board member (awaiting confirmation). These additional resources will build upon the existing strength and depth of the current board members and further enhance our ability to increase our enrollment.

Finally, the Academy feels that, despite the lower enrollment than our original charter submission, a smaller enrollment affords us the opportunity to work with students and distribute our resources more effectively. A smaller first year enrollment will help the students, teachers and parents to create a strong, positive educational environment, a culture of respect and relationships that will be the foundation for long term success.

We hope that the CSAC will affirm our ability to move ahead with the school opening in September. We have upward momentum, are well-resourced and have both internal and external support for our efforts. You have our firm commitment to opening a successful and innovative school. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ted Williams
President
Board of Directors