



**BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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Beacon City School District  
Board of Education

May 11, 2021

Ralph A. Rossi, II  
SUNY Charter Schools Institute  
353 Broadway  
Albany, New York 12246  
Re: Poughkeepsie City School District  
Little Water Preparatory Charter School

Dear Mr. Rossi:

We, the School Board of the Beacon City School District (BCSD), stand with the Poughkeepsie City School District (PCSD) in opposing the creation of the Little Water Preparatory School in Poughkeepsie, New York. We agree that establishing a charter school in Poughkeepsie is not in the best interest of either the students or the community, and will have a detrimental impact on school districts in the region. This includes the Beacon City School District, which could lose funding if BCSD students chose to attend the school.

But we want to be clear that our opposition to charter schools is not limited to the Little Water School. Broadly speaking, we believe that charter schools are fundamentally harmful to public education; for teachers, and especially for students. Charter schools syphon significant funding from often already struggling public school districts, but are not held to any standard of accountability for how that money is spent. Charter schools engage in practices that only serve their best interest, including cherry-picking students, having little or no tolerance for special education needs, and union busting. Education is not retail, it is a right. We value public education because it operates in the public interest. We believe in supporting every student, and the right of our teachers and staff to unionize.

We specifically oppose Little Water's application for the following reasons:

- Little Water would create a significant financial burden for the PCSD. Little Water itself stated that it is “expected to have a larger fiscal impact” on PCSD than other charters around the state due to its status as a small city school district. By year 5, Little Water anticipates its cost to support 360 students at \$5,614,272. That’s more than 5% of PCSD’s total budget — or the cost of 70 District teachers — to support less than 10% of the student population.
- Little Water’s charter application has no detailed curricula or measurable benchmarks. Nor does their proposed instructional plan promise greater benefit to students than the programs already underway in the PCSD. In fact, much of it is similar to the PCSD plan, but without any established partnerships or development in place to support it.
- PCSD is implementing its 5-year improvement plan to address low student performance. This includes an Academic Recovery Program, Early Literacy Program, expanded after-school learning, supports to address pandemic learning loss, interventions and support for graduation, along with supports for positive mental and physical health. With these robust initiatives underway, it is counterproductive to attempt to reinvent the wheel with a similar approach that has less rigorous planning and infrastructure supporting it. In fact, Little Water puts these programs in peril since its financial impact on the PCSD may force cuts that will make some of this programming impossible.
- An additional elementary school will increase competition in the region for qualified, certified educators. New York State already faces substantial teacher shortages, and Little Water would exacerbate the issue, especially since the transfer of students would not translate to a uniformly lower need for teachers in the PCSD or elsewhere. Although Little Water claims there are “higher percentages of inexperienced teachers” within PCSD, it plans to recruit educators from the same sources, including new graduates from Dutchess Community College, Marist, the Hudson Valley Young Professional network, etc. This unnecessarily increases competition for a limited pool of teachers, without addressing the ostensible issue of “inexperienced teachers.”

- Little Water doesn't have broad community buy-in. It only received eight letters of support and 56 petition signatures from Dutchess County residents in favor of opening.

We hope that the SUNY Charter Schools Institute will consider these points, and the significant efforts underway in the PCSD to address student needs and academic success in a systematic way. There are no new options being provided here, only a drain on necessary resources. The loss of funding and more competition for teachers will only hinder those efforts, and have a detrimental impact on scores of students in the region. We hope you will deny the request to open this school in Poughkeepsie.

Thank you for your consideration.

Beacon City School District Board of Education