

Comments on the New 2020-21 New Charter Application for the Proposed Shirley Chisholm Empowerment Charter School

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My name is ML Wernecke and I am the Director of the PA Charter Performance Center, a new initiative of Public Citizens for Children and Youth. The Center is dedicated to producing unbiased, accurate, and timely information to advance sound state-level charter school policy and I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the application for the proposed Shirley Chisholm Empowerment Charter School.

Authorizing the Empowerment Charter School risks destabilizing established schools that are already demonstrating high academic growth. The applicant states that it will recruit students from three zip codes: 19140, 19141, and 19144. As shown below, 14,224 students attend 27 charter and traditional public schools in these neighborhoods. Adding new seats at a new school will inevitably reduce enrollment at existing public schools, destabilizing schools that are making progress.

		Number of Schools			
	Enrollment	Exceed PA Standard for Growth	Meet PA Standard for Growth	Below PA Standard for Growth	Total Number of Schools
19140	7830	9	2	3	14
19141	2693	4	2		6
19144	3701	4	3		7
Total	14224	17	7	3	27
Share		63%	26%	11%	100%

Source for Growth Tiers: Philadelphia Schools Partnership, *K-8 School Quality, Choice & Access in Philadelphia*, January 13, 2021 and author calculations

Pennsylvania’s PVAAS growth measures are reliable and validated indicators of improved school performance. PVAAS uses PSSA test results to gauge student academic growth and assess whether schools are making more progress than other schools in the commonwealth. As the

table below shows, *nearly nine out of ten schools (89%) in this applicant's recruitment zone are at or above the norm for the state.* This means students in these schools are progressing at or more than would be expected based on statewide trends. Authorizing new schools at the expense of schools that are already making progress does not support the goal of enabling students to meet academic standards.

If the Board of Education chooses to authorize new seats in any new charter schools, we urge you to do so in a manner that will not result in a net increase in total charter school seats as this would negatively affect the availability of funding to educate students attending schools operated directly by the District.

Thank you for the opportunity to add this statement to the record.