

# COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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August 18, 2017

Susan Miller Carello  
Executive Director  
Charter Schools Institute  
State University of New York  
41 State Street, Suite 700  
Albany, New York 12207

## Re: Review of Renewal for Success Academy Harlem 4

Ms. Carello:

The members of Community Education Council, District 3 (“CEC3”) respectfully request that you withdraw your approval of the early extension and the agreement to add additional grades at Success Academy Harlem 4, as per the notification letter of November 7, 2016, sent to the “General Public.” As the parent leaders of District 3 which represent the public school children and parents of the Upper West Side and lower Harlem, CEC3 has already expressed its concern for this renewal, the secretive process and backroom dealings that led to the renewal, and the damage that charter schools continue to cause to public schools in District 3. However with the recent enlightenment that the “General Public” now has on the integrity of the Chairman of the Board of the Success Academy Charter Schools (“SACS”), we would like to reiterate our belief that this application for renewal deserves reconsideration by your board, appropriate public hearings in the community on the matter and the possible consideration for complete rejection.

First, Success Academy Harlem 4 submitted an application for a renewal of its charter on or about August 15, 2016; however this charter is not scheduled to expire until August 1, 2018. The five-year renewal process as required by New York State Charter Schools Act, S 2851.2.P is meant to ensure that charter schools demonstrate proficiencies in educating the children that they serve, year after year. By approving the renewal a full 18 months in advance of the expiration of its charter, the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute (“Charter Institute”) disregarded the responsibility a charter school has for adequately complying with the previously approved charter. To further this point, the New York State Education Department Board of Regents (the “Regents”) twice returned blanket approvals of a total of eighteen Success Academy Charter Schools back to the Charter Institute for early renewals, among them Success Academy Harlem 4. This Regents noted that “Approving the renewal of any charter school years before the expiration of the charter does not allow timely review of the school’s educational and fiscal soundness, community support, legal compliance, or means by which the school will meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program. The charters should be abandoned, and the schools should be directed to resubmit the application no earlier than one year prior to the expiration of the charter term.”

Second, the “General Public” was not notified of this renewal application, nor given the chance to comment on the merits of the application as per New York State Charter Schools Act, S 2857.1. In fact, when the local school community was notified of a “hearing” on January 27, 2017, nearly two months had passed with the approval already completed. The hearing itself was held at PS241, which is co-located with Opportunity Charter School and the lower grades of Success Academy Harlem 4, on February 7, 2017.

Several members of CEC3 attended and spoke about this sham of a public hearing, and ironically, not a single representative of Success Academy showed up to the hearing to speak on behalf of the organization. Clearly, they didn't need to as their renewal request had already been approved.

Third, in the lower part of Harlem ("D3 Harlem"), where both Success Academy Harlem 1 and Success Academy Harlem 4 are located, a mere quarter of a mile away from one another, the community is in a state of complete educational confusion for elementary schools. District 3 Harlem is geographically a very small area. As a comparison, D3 Harlem is approximately the size of two-three school "zones" located on the Upper West Side. However, in this incredibly small community, there are two Success Academy schools, FIVE other charter elementary schools and SIX public elementary schools. The community is being "served" by a total of thirteen elementary schools. This level of "choice" applies undue pressure to parents and has rendered them into a state of "consumer vertigo" a phrase coined to describe the paralysis that develops when a consumer simply has too many options from which to choose. The public in D3 Harlem must be given the opportunity to voice their support for or concerns for SACS' saturation within D3 Harlem.

Lastly, the reprehensible comments made this week by SACS Chairman Daniel Loeb call into question the values of and true intentions of this educational organization. Seeing the incident for what it meant to the community SACS is intending to serve, the only minority member of the SACS board, Shavar Jeffries, resigned in protest. Moreover, despite the outcry of negative sentiment displayed by experts in education, policy makers, and politicians, the founder of SACS has chosen to continue support for Mr. Loeb, disregarding the very population of children she wishes to educate.

Thank you for your consideration,

Community Education Council District 3

Cc: Chancellor Carmen Fariña, New York City Department of Education  
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat  
U.S. Congressman Jerry Nadler  
Joseph W. Belluck, Chair, SUNY Board of Trustees  
Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, New York State Education Department  
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Borough President Gale A. Brewer  
City Council Member Mark Levine  
City Council Member Bill Perkins  
City Council Member Helen Rosenthal  
Dr. Hazel Dukes, NAACP New York President  
Peter Rose, NAACP National Task Force  
Melissa Harris, New York City DOE Charter School Office