



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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October 2nd, 2018

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

Re: Opportunity Charter Expansion in Harlem

Dear Ms. Carello,

The New York City Department of Education has recently proposed its Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project. One of the stated goals of this project is to make sure that all public school students in the Harlem and El Barrio neighborhoods have equitable access to educational opportunities. In order to fully measure the quality of educational opportunities that students in these neighborhoods are receiving, the Department of Education must provide that the current status not be changed or impacted by the addition of any new schools. These communities need to be able to fairly assess what resources are available to help improve their neighborhood public schools without the added burden of having resources allocated to additional charter schools.

The members of Community Education Counsel for District 3 of New York City (“CEC3”) who represent Manhattan’s Upper West Side and Southern Harlem (“District 3 Harlem”), respectfully request that you deny Opportunity Charter’s proposed expansion which seeks to establish a kindergarten through fifth grade school, potentially in District 3 Harlem. Furthermore, the members of CEC3 call for a moratorium on the expansion, extension or creation of any new charter schools into District 3 and particularly in District 3 Harlem until such time as the Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project has completed its objectives.

At the present time, District 3 Harlem already contains 7 charter schools and 6 public elementary schools all crammed into the equivalent of approximately 2 school zones located on the Upper West Side. In this small geographic region, District 3 Harlem currently has 12 schools that are enrolling kindergarten children. As a result, according to DOE retention data from 2016, more than 300 kindergarten students residing in District 3 Harlem were enrolled in 61 different schools. This is simply unacceptable. The oversaturation of available seats in District 3 Harlem makes it impossible to sufficiently enroll students in the public schools in order to allow them to thrive and be successful. D3 Harlem public schools simply cannot survive if charter schools are allowed to enter or expand in District 3 Harlem.

Parents who reside in District 3 Harlem are unfairly burdened with this so-called choice as the majority of District 3 Harlem elementary schools are struggling to enroll sufficient numbers of

students to allow them to provide activities and programs found at other schools in District 3. The public schools and students in District 3 Harlem will be unduly harmed by approving an expansion that would allow for Opportunity Charter to establish an elementary school within District 3 Harlem. CEC3 is concerned about the diversion of resources away from already under-resourced public schools in District 3 Harlem and towards charter schools which are not subject to the same accountability standards as public schools. Furthermore, CEC3 is concerned about the location of any new or expanded charter school. The public school facilities in District 3 Harlem are already stretched thin with charter school co-locations. Such co-locations have led to a shortage of space in our district public school which often means necessary services are not properly provided to students along with the loss of cluster and/or specialty spaces. Co-located charter schools often receive preferential treatment from the Department of Education over their public school counterparts, including improved classroom renovations and modernization and scheduling preferences..

The members of CEC3, parents and advocates for public education in District 3 believe that all efforts must be made to ensure that the expansion, creation or extension of any charter school must be scrutinized to prevent any undue burden on long-standing public schools. As such, CEC3 calls for a moratorium on the extension, expansion or creation of any charter schools in District 3 and the greater Harlem area.

Sincerely,

Community Education Council 3

Cc: Chancellor Richard A. Carranza, New York City Department of Education
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat
U.S. Congressman Jerry Nadler
H. Carl McCall, Chair, SUNY Board of Trustees
Joseph W. Belluck, Member, SUNY Board of Trustees
Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, New York State Education Department
Regent Chancellor Betty A. Rosa
Regent Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown
Regent Nan E. Mead
Senator Marisol Alcantara
Senator Brian Benjamin
Senator Brad Hoylman
Senator José Serrano
Assembly Member Inez E. Dickens
Assembly Member Daniel J. O'Donnell
Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal
Public Advocate Letitia James
NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer
Borough President Gale A. Brewer
City Council Member Mark Levine
City Council Member Bill Perkins
City Council Member Helen Rosenthal