

Comments on Brooklyn Prospect New Charter School Application

The following comments were presented by two members of CEC15 - President Camille Casaretti and Charter Committee Chair Antonia Ferraro - at the DOE Public Hearing on Monday, September 17, 2018.

District 15 currently has no need for Charter schools as the law is written.

Historically and currently our schools are working well, utilizing progressive and innovative methodologies and resources to meet the needs of all of our students.

While we are seeking to enhance services to special education students through more ASD Nest, dyslexia-focused, and twice exceptional programs, at this time we know of no Charters that service these specific populations, including this applicant.

Additionally, while the District is always seeking additional seats to expand school options and provide increased Pre-K and Three-K seats for our burgeoning population in all areas of the district, we are categorically opposed to any incoming Charter school that plans to co-locate within existing district schools or take any existing DOE space. Furthermore, we vehemently oppose Charter outreach that "skims the cream" of high performing students and "pushes out" challenging students.

While we acknowledge and appreciate that Brooklyn Prospect is not planning to co-locate, CEC 15 is a body that represents the interests of District 15, and thus cannot support any policy that draws public funds and resources away from District 15 schools. The bottom line is every student enrolled in a Charter school pulls funding from our District schools. Brooklyn Prospect's application for a K-3 elementary school and 6-12 middle/high school seeks to draw District 15 resources without offering anything District 15 doesn't already have.

District 15 currently has 11 middle schools, one of which is a 6-12 school that offers an International Baccalaureate program in a diverse setting with strong, professional, experienced and fully-certified teachers. Further, District 15 is embarking on a historic integration plan through the D15 Diversity Plan to remove barriers to diverse learning environments for the entire district.

Brooklyn Prospect has not identified a curriculum-based need in District 15 for the proposed elementary school and thus fails to fulfill the mandate to provide new alternatives within the local public education system that would offer the greatest educational benefit to students under New York State Charter Schools Act §2852(9-a)(b).

Overcrowding remains District 15's more pressing issue, yet this charter will not be located in the neighborhood with the greatest seat need. Brooklyn Prospect presented to CEC15 that the school would likely be located in Gowanus or Red Hook, rather than overcrowded Sunset Park.

According to the New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 §2851(2)(q) charter applicants must *provide evidence of adequate community support and an assessment of the projected programmatic and fiscal impact of the school on other public and nonpublic schools in the area.* In May, Brooklyn Prospect presented to CEC15. The charter claimed but did not provide evidence of a lengthy waiting list of parents. While the charter may have community interest, they neglected to consider the negative fiscal impact on the surrounding schools. When enrollment drops below 250 students schools can no longer hire full-time arts teachers. Low enrollment in Red Hook is a persistent problem and Brooklyn Prospect could easily siphon enough students from these schools to threaten their arts programs.

Additionally, Brooklyn Prospect hasn't partnered with low performing public schools in District 15 to share best educational practices and innovations. The charter claims to partner, but our district has not received any of these benefits.

Finally, Brooklyn Prospect Charter recently asked permission from SUNY to form a Charter Management Organization (Prospect Schools, Inc.). in order to expand into Connecticut. We opposed Brooklyn Prospect Charter's request to form a CMO structure because it would facilitate expansion here in District 15 as well as out-of-state.

CEC15's Charter Committee remains consistent in its assertion that the original intent of Charters is to fill a local need. As a CMO, Brooklyn Prospect Charter's growth is no longer dictated by local need, rather a network business model in search of a need. This new charter school application only confirms that becoming a CMO was a step toward the expansion of Prospect Schools, Inc. in District 15, untethered from actual need and will undermine funding of surrounding District schools in the process.

Thus, CEC15's Charter Committee does not support Brooklyn Prospect's Charter Application.

We ask the Chancellor, the Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York to reject Brooklyn Prospect's proposed charter on the grounds that it fails to locate this charter school in a region where there is a demonstrable lack of alternatives.