



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 15

Office: 131 Livingston Street, Room 301, Brooklyn, New York 11201

CEC15@schools.nyc.gov | tel. 718-935-4267 | facebook.com/CECD15 | CECD15.org

February 12, 2020

To: New York State Department of Education Charter Office
State Education Department Board of Regents
Department of Education, Office of Charter Schools

Re: **Hellenic Classical Charter School Merger Request**

The Community Education Council for District 15 (CEC15) values public accountability and will not support any Charter applicants that choose to pursue mergers. We wholeheartedly oppose the merger of the Hellenic Classical Charter Schools.

Just last month, Joy Petrakos, Founding Director of Operations at Hellenic Park Slope, announced that Christina Tettonis, the school's principal, will now become the Superintendent of both HCCS schools. Each school will have its own principal under the guidance of the Superintendent and the Board. She alluded to a chain of Hellenic charter schools on the horizon.

The Community Education Council for District 15 (CEC15) will not support any Charter applicants that employ Charter Management Organizations (CMO), or pursue any framework that enables the creation of Charter school networks and/or parallel Charter school districts.

School mergers occur when schools are struggling with low and/or declining enrollment over several school years, or when there are budgetary and/or programmatic challenges. This is not the case for Hellenic. Hellenic has 2 private sites that they use - one in Brooklyn and one in Staten Island. With a 13 mile distance between buildings, there is no physical way for this school to merge. And, per Ms. Petrakos, these schools will remain in separate locations with 2 different Principals.

This is a merger in name only, with the long term goal of creating a parallel school district, with it's own Superintendent - in other words a charter network.

Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) do not consider it necessary to provide information about their operations despite public records laws that govern all public schools in New York. Non-profit CMOs are not in and of themselves subject to FOIL or required to have an appeal process covered by the state records law. There is already a lack of transparency and oversight that exists with Charter Schools. Merging these schools will create an unnecessary level of bureaucracy.

In addition, CEC15 does not support Charter School rental reimbursements that use city and state funds to reimburse charters for private space. Rental aid to charters is ballooning every year. The Governor is currently proposing a budget increase for charter school facilities aid by 58.73% over last year.

Every year, Charter Schools take over \$50 million dollars from our District 15 Schools without the full transparency or accountability of state and local oversight - and no legal duty to be fully transparent. The 500 students that attend Hellenic pull over \$12 Million from our District schools.

We believe that focus must be put on academically advancing and desegregating public schools, not setting the ground for more charter chains. We hope the New York State Education Department refocuses toward public schools rather than permitting endless charter mergers and expansions.

As representatives of District 15 families and educators, CEC15 OPPOSES this merger request.

Sincerely,

Camille Casaretti
President, CEC15

Please include this letter in the minutes and Public Hearing Report.