

In The Matter Of:

*DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL*

May 17, 2022

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ARKANSAS DIVISION OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

MAY 17, 2022
9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

MS. DEBORAH COFFMAN	Chairperson/ADE Asst. Commissioner - Public School Accountability
DR. ERIC FLOWERS	ADE Asst. to Director
MR. PHIL BALDWIN	Retired Bank Executive
MS. KARLI SARACINI	ADE Asst. Commissioner - Educator Effectiveness & Licensure
MS. TOYCE NEWTON	Former State Board of Education Member
MR. KIM DAVIS	Former State Board of Education Member

ADE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. WHITNEY JAMES DESE Attorney

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. DORIE SUMMONS DESE Charter Schools Director

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas

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- Exhibit One (1)
 Friendship Aspire Academies Grade Configuration Chart

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P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Good morning. The May 17, 2022 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Department of Education auditorium and ask that you please silence all of your devices.

We do have our presenters joining us via Zoom today, and we do have several of our Charter Panel members: Mr. Davis, Mr. Baldwin, and Ms. Newton are online. And Ms. Saracini and Dr. Flowers are here in the auditorium with me.

So good morning, everyone.

CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And with no additional ado let's get right into the Consent Agenda. You had the opportunity to look at the minutes. And are there any revisions to the minutes or do I have a motion to approve?

MS. SARACINI: I make a motion to approve.

DR. FLOWERS: Second.

CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So I have a motion from Ms. Saracini and a second from Dr. Flowers to approve the minutes as presented.

All those in favor?

DR. FLOWERS: Aye.

1 MS. SARACINI: Aye.

2 MR. BALDWIN: Aye.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Davis -- Mr. Davis?

4 DR. DAVIS: Aye.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

6 MS. NEWTON: (raised her hand)

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. Minutes are approved
8 as submitted.

9 A-1: CONSIDERATION OF FRIENDSHIP ASPIRE AMENDMENT REQUEST

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Our first agenda
11 item, Ms. Summons, if you will present.

12 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning. Dorie Summons, the
13 DESE Director of Charter Schools.

14 The charter is requesting to merge Friendship
15 Aspire of Pine Bluff, Friendship Aspire of Little
16 Rock, and Friendship Aspire Southeast Pine Bluff.
17 They also want to change the grade levels served from
18 grades 10-12 to grades 5-12 and increase the
19 enrollment cap for Southeast Pine Bluff from 25 to 75
20 students.

21 We have three virtual attendees representing
22 Friendship Aspire: Mr. Joe Harris, Dr. Tran, and Ms.
23 Virginia Perry.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you are speaking on behalf
25 of Friendship Aspire, if you will raise your right

1 hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony
2 you're about to give shall be the truth, the whole
3 truth, and nothing but the truth?

4 (ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. So we have
6 prepared a spreadsheet that I would like to share.
7 And hopefully as we go through this, Ms. Perry and
8 Tran, if you'll help us confirm or change.

9 DR. TRAN: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: It was kind of confusing, and
11 so I know we've been back and forth and we just want
12 to make sure that we've got the most accurate
13 information.

14 DR. TRAN: Sure.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So let me get that up on our
16 screen.

17 DR. TRAN: Ms. Coffman, do you want me to start
18 off with a little bit of context to why we're asking
19 for this consolidation now?

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Yes, and we'll do that as we
21 go along.

22 DR. TRAN: Okay. Sure.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay? Is that okay?

24 DR. TRAN: Yeah, most definitely.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. So the first

1 thing that we think we understood is that you want to
2 put all five of your schools under Friendship Aspire
3 Academies Arkansas. Is that correct?

4 DR. TRAN: That is correct, ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And then you're going
6 to rename some of your schools, and so we've tried to
7 capture that. Our understanding is the nomenclature
8 of the school names will be Friendship Aspire
9 Academy, then the location, and then the third part
10 of the nomenclature will be elementary or middle, if
11 applicable.

12 DR. TRAN: Correct, ma'am.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that would be Friendship
14 Aspire Academy Downtown Pine Bluff, Friendship Aspire
15 Academy Pine Bluff, Friendship Aspire Academy
16 Southeast Pine Bluff (removing the word High),
17 Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock Elementary,
18 Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock Middle School.
19 Is that correct?

20 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

21 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So the next thing that
22 we were looking at is we were trying to identify what
23 the current cap is in each building. So, if you'll
24 go over that with me and confirm or raise into
25 question anything that you think is incorrect?

1 So our understanding is that Friendship Aspire
2 Academy Downtown Pine Bluff is going to be its own
3 separate school that will open this fall. Is that
4 correct?

5 DR. TRAN: That is correct, ma'am.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And your cap will be 400
7 students in that building?

8 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Friendship Academy Pine
10 Bluff, their cap is 480 students?

11 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Friendship Aspire Academy
13 Southeast Pine Bluff, their cap is 720 students?

14 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Friendship Aspire Academy
16 Little Rock Elementary and Friendship Aspire Academy
17 Little Rock Middle School have a joint cap that we
18 need you to help us break apart. So right now you're
19 approved for 685 across both campuses, but we
20 actually need a cap per building.

21 DR. TRAN: The elementary school is 480, ma'am.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So we're going to put
23 a 480 cap?

24 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. So that will

1 leave --

2 DR. TRAN: 205 total middle school, ma'am.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that will leave 205 for
4 the high school?

5 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

6 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. That will give a grand
7 total cap for the Friendship Aspire Academies
8 Arkansas a 2,285 total. Correct?

9 DR. TRAN: That is correct.

10 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Perfect.

11 All right. So we went back through and we were
12 trying to follow along because it kind of got
13 confusing when we got to Friendship Aspire Academy
14 Southeast Pine Bluff.

15 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So that's the one where
17 you've been progressively taking the high school out
18 --

19 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- and then starting back in
21 --

22 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- with elementary. So while
24 you do have a cap of 720 --

25 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- your progressive cap for
2 --

3 DR. TRAN: Changed.

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- this coming year was 25,
5 but you're wanting to raise it to 75?

6 DR. TRAN: That is correct.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So it doesn't change
8 your overall cap; it's just your progressive cap?

9 DR. TRAN: Correct. So we're just trying to
10 open up the seats, not increase the seats.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Correct.

12 DR. TRAN: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then we were a little
14 confused because our understanding is during the next
15 school year you will have 5th grade and 12th grade
16 onsite?

17 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: But what you're asking to do
19 over time is to build it into a 5-12. Is that
20 correct?

21 DR. TRAN: Correct, ma'am.

22 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. And then
23 the last thing I wanted to confirm is that even
24 though we're making all of these changes and we will
25 issue a new contract --

1 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- that you are maintaining
3 the same waivers and that your charter will expire
4 June 30, 2023. And we'll come back and build out
5 your next length of charter and what the progressive
6 caps will be for that at that time. Is that correct?

7 DR. TRAN: That is correct, ma'am.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Good deal.

9 All right. Let me come back -- and I'm going to
10 go ahead and leave this up, Tran, and let you then --

11 DR. TRAN: Sure.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- give some background, some
13 rationale for --

14 DR. TRAN: Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- why you're making the
16 changes and what all is going on.

17 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am, most definitely.

18 Well, thank you again for having us this
19 morning. We appreciate that. And thank you for
20 hearing us.

21 At Friendship, at this moment in time at our
22 school we have --

23 Oh, before I forget let me do the introductions.

24 We've got Ms. Virginia Perry, she's the Deputy

25 Superintendent; and Mr. Joe Harris is on the line,

1 who's the CEO of Friendship Education Foundation.

2 So originally we had three LEAs. So we have the
3 Pine Bluff, which is the Hazel Street, that has its
4 own LEA; then we have the Little Rock and the middle
5 school, which is its own LEA as well; and then,
6 finally, we have the Southeast High School where we
7 took over last year and they were on its own LEA --
8 so they had their own separate LEA, separate
9 contracts, separate books, and separate everything.

10 And so the reason why we're coming to you this
11 morning to request a consolidation is so that we can
12 streamline everything and make our operations and our
13 books a little bit easier to do. Because at this
14 moment in time, as you know, you know, you've got
15 three separate I guess LEAs and that just sometimes
16 complicates everything, being that we're still under,
17 you know, the Friendship Aspire Arkansas banner. And
18 so that's why that we felt that it will be easier in
19 consolidating and then putting it all under one LEA
20 under the Friendship Aspire Academy Arkansas LEA.
21 And that should help with the streamlining of
22 operation, the streamlining of books, the
23 streamlining of finances --

24 MS. HENRY: Standards.

25 DR. TRAN: -- and standards as well. So instead

1 of doing three standards, we can do one standard
2 which will encompass the whole district but at the
3 same time, you know, just be -- make it a little bit
4 easier to operate and so-on and so-forth.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Tran.

6 Are you ready for questions?

7 DR. TRAN: Well, I'm sure Mr. Harris --

8 Do you have anything else you want to add to
9 that, Mr. Harris?

10 MR. HARRIS: No.

11 DR. TRAN: Okay. Yes, we're ready for
12 questions, ma'am.

13 PANEL QUESTIONS

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Mr. Davis, if you
15 would like to begin?

16 MR. DAVIS: Yeah, just a couple of questions
17 from me. This all makes sense. But considering that
18 you are in various communities in Little Rock and
19 Pine Bluff, clearly there is some cultural difference
20 between Little Rock and Pine Bluff. Help me
21 understand what you're doing to sort of create this
22 one umbrella or speak to this idea of creating a
23 school culture where both institutions can thrive,
24 but at the same time recognizing the independent
25 difference between the two?

1 DR. TRAN: Sure, most definitely. So, you know,
2 we -- even though we are operating under three
3 separate LEAs we still -- if you look at it
4 virtually, we still are operating the same because we
5 -- all of our teachers, we try to have the same
6 process and procedures, the same handbooks,
7 professional development, PLCs, so-on and so-forth --

8 MR. DAVIS: Sure.

9 DR. TRAN: -- throughout our network. So it's
10 not like it's different, even though the schools --
11 like, for example, the school itself, it's the
12 principals that bring the uniqueness to the school.
13 Right? But the actual operations and everything,
14 that has always been the same and it has always been
15 a function under Friendship Aspire Academy. And, you
16 know, the foundation has been the management
17 organization helping that, driving that to insure
18 that culture, to insure that process and procedures,
19 to insure that everything else is the same so that
20 the teachers in Pine Bluff get the same professional
21 development, the same process and procedures as those
22 in Little Rock, and so vice versa.

23 So at this moment in time, you know, our team is
24 one very tight-knit group. You know, the principals
25 share ideas among each other, like what they're doing

1 at this school that's different, like in Little Rock,
2 and what Pine Bluff is doing different -- what the
3 principal is doing different in Pine Bluff. So even
4 though, you know, we are common, it's still a little
5 bit different depending on the geographic location
6 that they're located in, based upon the actual
7 principal that's there. And so we try to give that
8 autonomy to the principal to give that uniqueness to
9 that school. Because, you know, like, for example,
10 like you said, Mr. Davis, in Little Rock it might be
11 a little bit different than Pine Bluff and that in
12 itself is reflected by the principal in the way that
13 they operate their schools.

14 MR. DAVIS: Thank you. Nothing further from me.

15 DR. TRAN: Sure.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Baldwin?

17 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. Thank you. And this does
18 make a lot of sense. I really just have two
19 questions. And I'm not a professional educator, so
20 this first question may be from that context.

21 So the merger of the LEAs, explain to me exactly
22 what benefits you get by merging the LEAs together?

23 DR. TRAN: So at this moment in time it's --
24 I'll give you operation-wise. So usually because we
25 have three LEAs we have to use three standards of

1 accreditation, per LEA. So consolidating the LEAs
2 together, instead of doing three standards of
3 accreditation we just do one. Okay?

4 Also, with -- let's look at Child Nutrition.
5 Because we want three LEAs we have to do three types
6 of requests for reimbursement, books and paperwork
7 for Child Nutrition -- right -- because we have three
8 schools and three LEAs. So, for example, at this
9 moment in time, given those three LEAs, what Child
10 Nutrition does is it sends the funds to one school
11 and we have to disperse it to the other schools. So,
12 again, consolidating the LEAs together allows us to
13 streamline that process and then it just -- that way,
14 we don't have to take that extra time to find out,
15 okay, how many students we serve at Little Rock, how
16 many students we serve at Southeast, to then disperse
17 the funds. It would just be under one accountable,
18 which will be easier to maintain and so-on and so-
19 forth.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So it's really you're
21 stating from a reporting and compliance
22 responsibility, which makes sense. I mean --

23 DR. TRAN: Right.

24 MR. BALDWIN: -- that sounds like an easier way
25 to do it.

1 DR. TRAN: Yes.

2 MR. BALDWIN: The other question would be -- I
3 was a little bit surprised that you-all said that you
4 anticipate no changes in your budget. Is it -- it
5 would seem that there's possible efficiencies and
6 some budget changes that could occur, even though
7 they may not be large. Do you think that over time
8 the ease of reporting and compliance will allow you
9 to be more operationally efficient and maybe
10 economically efficient?

11 DR. TRAN: Sure. Yes. At this moment in time,
12 we operate very efficiently, you know. We pour all
13 the money back into the classroom and all the
14 finances for every single school in the Southeast is
15 in the black. But to your point, most definitely, it
16 would be more efficient because it allows us to
17 easily manage those books. So over time, most
18 certainly, to your point, it will become much better.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

20 MR. HARRIS: And we've presented conservative
21 budget numbers. But we think in time we will
22 actually see cost savings by consolidating.

23 MR. BALDWIN: I would agree. And this sounds
24 like a smart decision. That's all my questions,
25 Madam Chair.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Newton?

2 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

3 MS. NEWTON: Can you hear me now?

4 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

5 MR. HARRIS: Yes.

6 MS. NEWTON: Okay. Great. Great.

7 Those questions by Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Davis
8 were my questions also. But -- and certainly like
9 Mr. Baldwin, I'm not a professional educator and I
10 tend to look at things more from a social work
11 aspect. So I'm wondering -- this is -- these are
12 various communities, so I want you to address -- Mr.
13 Davis talked about culture. And I want you to talk
14 to us about the cultures of the schools, because
15 primarily say in Little Rock they're in different
16 areas and different communities, so the culture is
17 different. What adjustments or what expectations or
18 what approaches or interventions will be different
19 for leverage to address the different populations?

20 MR. HARRIS: I can start this one. We -- the
21 system itself essentially will be respectful and
22 responsive to the needs of both the parents and the
23 kids at each individual campus. For example, we
24 hired our first social worker that works now across
25 all of the campuses. She's doing it in a school-by-

1 school basis. And we're seeing that each of our
2 campuses, to some degree, some more than others, need
3 different support for both families, and we're
4 developing our own resource manual. It responds to
5 the local and immediate resources that are available
6 for those -- that school. So that's part of kind of
7 how we're being respectful of our neighborhoods and
8 the communities. We know we're talking about two
9 different cities and we will continue to respond to
10 them the way that we are as two separate communities
11 -- and I'm saying communities being two separate
12 cities. So our plan is to not consolidate the
13 culture in the way that we respond to communities;
14 instead doing it the way that we're doing it right
15 now, which we believe is successful, is responding to
16 the needs of that individual community and school and
17 parents.

18 DR. TRAN: And also at the same time we have a
19 lot of parent meetings. So we listen to our parents
20 and also we provide, you know, our parents surveys.
21 And so each school looks at the parents' survey and
22 the parent meeting and we take our model to -- you
23 know, to service the community, in its community.

24 MS. NEWTON: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Dr. Flowers?

1 DR. FLOWERS: Thank you.

2 What type of impact do you foresee this
3 consolidation having on teachers, especially with
4 professional development?

5 DR. TRAN: Sure. So I don't think there will be
6 a negative impact because at this moment in time we
7 service all of our teachers. So, for example, at the
8 end of every single year -- not the end -- at the
9 beginning of every single year we have a three-week
10 boot camp. The first week is where we go and onboard
11 our new teachers, our new staff. And then also the
12 second and third week that's when we have a big two-
13 week boot camp where everybody in our network,
14 regardless of which campus they're in, we come
15 together and we provide professional development to
16 them about curriculum, to culture, to anything that
17 they request. Because, again, we also -- you know,
18 based on previous years, we provided a survey to our
19 teachers to see, okay, what is good, what is it that
20 they like, and what is it they don't like. And then,
21 based upon that we kind of like provide -- you know,
22 we do our program for that next year.

23 So I don't think it changes at all, because it
24 makes it better, the consolidation. It kind of like
25 just makes it better. But anything that we're doing

1 right now we're doing as a network-wide, so it
2 doesn't change and it's not going to change.

3 DR. FLOWERS: Thank you for that clarity.

4 DR. TRAN: Yes, sir.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini?

6 MS. SARACINI: I just really have a comment. I
7 want to say I commend you for trying to streamline
8 and make this more efficient. And I look forward to
9 your renewal in the spring of 2023, because I know
10 this will just get you to that point. Thank you.

11 DR. TRAN: Yes. Great. Thank you so much.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Tran, I have a few more
13 clarifying questions.

14 I want to look at the 22-23 row on the
15 spreadsheet. I'll see if I can make it a little bit
16 larger. So what we're seeing is that Friendship
17 Aspire Academy Downtown Pine Bluff, you will be open
18 in the 22-23 school year for K-1?

19 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And do you have -- I mean you
21 have a cap of 400. Do you want a progressive cap for
22 next year?

23 DR. TRAN: So I think at this moment in time we
24 should leave it like that, Ms. --

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

1 DR. TRAN: -- Ms. Coffman, because that allows
2 us flexibility, you know, to do what we need to do.
3 Because, otherwise, we might have to come back in
4 front of you and change it. So leaving it like that
5 I think just allows us operational-wise to do what we
6 need to do for that school downtown.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And then the plan for
8 that building downtown is that it will eventually be
9 a K-2 building. Is that correct?

10 DR. TRAN: K-3 building, Ma'am.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: K-3?

12 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And then at Friendship
14 Aspire Academy Pine Bluff --

15 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- for 2022-23, will it be K-
17 4 or K-5 next year?

18 DR. TRAN: So that building will be a K-4. And
19 that's why we asked you to move the 5th grade over to
20 Southeast so that -- to allow our students in the 5th
21 grade to start acclimating to the middle school. At
22 this moment in time we are in the process of
23 renovating that site so that it can start to
24 accommodate.

25 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And so will it remain a K-4

1 building?

2 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And are you keeping --
4 you'll keep your cap at 480 there, just keep that
5 open?

6 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And then, at
8 Friendship Aspire -- well, that answers that
9 question.

10 Okay. Friendship Aspire Academy Southeast Pine
11 Bluff, you are requesting that it become a 5-12 --

12 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

13 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- with the larger cap of
14 720.

15 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: That next school year it will
17 only have 5th and 12th graders, for a cap of 75?

18 DR. TRAN: That is correct, ma'am.

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. So let's take that
20 off.

21 And Friendship Aspire Academy Little Rock
22 Elementary is going --

23 DR. TRAN: 480.

24 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: It's going to be a K-4.
25 What's the grade configuration?

1 DR. TRAN: Yes, that is correct. So this year
2 it's a K-3, so we're going to add on a grade next
3 year which will be a 4th grade. So it will be a K-4,
4 ma'am.

5 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. And the cap for that
6 is 480, and you'll keep that one open?

7 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And then, finally, Friendship
9 Aspire Academy Little Rock Middle School will --

10 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- serve grades 6-8 next year
12 and your cap is 205 students?

13 DR. TRAN: That is correct, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. That
15 answers all of my questions.

16 DR. TRAN: Okay. Great.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you for working through
18 that. We'll clean this up and make sure this is
19 clean so that we can put it on the State Board agenda
20 as well.

21 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

22 LEGAL CONCERNS

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Any other -- any legal
24 concerns, Ms. James? I know we did -- I did ask you
25 earlier, but we will issue a new charter if this is

1 approved?

2 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

3 My name is Whitney James, with the Department.

4 We will issue a new charter contract because
5 some of the information is changed and we want to
6 make sure that the enrollment is clearly outlined.

7 I don't have any legal concerns because
8 Friendship is not asking for any new waivers.

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And so the waivers they
10 currently have will apply -- elementary waivers will
11 apply to elementary, high school waivers to the high
12 school, and middle school to the middle school?

13 MS. JAMES: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay.

15 MS. JAMES: Thank you.

16 ADDITIONAL PANEL QUESTIONS

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And one more thing, Tran,
18 just to confirm that by going under one charter that
19 everything that you described in the reduction of
20 work for having that one charter kind of like at a
21 district level --

22 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- certainly meets the
24 standards -- makes meeting the standards and the
25 accountability for that much easier. But you will

1 have an LEA number for each of the schools --

2 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

3 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- in addition for all five
4 of those, and they will be required to meet standards
5 at the school level. So district and then the school
6 level.

7 DR. TRAN: Yes, most definitely, ma'am.

8 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. And then, if
9 approved, after the State Board meeting I would
10 recommend that you work with the Charter Office and
11 School Performance Office on filling out the LEA
12 change request --

13 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- so that it's very clear
15 about what 22-23 school year would look like.

16 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: So let them help you so we
18 get it right the first time.

19 DR. TRAN: Yes, ma'am.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right.

21 I'll accept a motion.

22 MS. NEWTON: I have a motion. I move to approve
23 the request from Friendship to increase their student
24 population and to consolidate their campuses as
25 stated and to consolidate their LEAs.

1 MS. SARACINI: I second.

2 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. I have a motion
3 by Ms. Newton and a second by Ms. Saracini to approve
4 the amendment for Friendship Aspire Academies
5 Arkansas.

6 All those -- any discussion?

7 All those in favor?

8 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

9 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Motion is
10 approved.

11 VOTING SHEETS/RATIONALE

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you'll take just a moment,
13 Panel Members, to fill out your voting sheet.

14 (BRIEF MOMENT OF SILENCE)

15 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Coffman, I'm not able to work
16 within the sheet. So I'll just have to tell you.

17 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: If you'll tell us what you
18 want to say I'll have someone --

19 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: -- on the charter team fill
21 it in as we go.

22 MS. NEWTON: Okay. I vote yes. And the reason
23 is that the proposal is -- the proposal will
24 consolidate and streamline planning and operations
25 for this charter.

1 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, Ms. Newton.

2 Mr. Baldwin.

3 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I vote yes. I think the
4 change was appropriate and forward-looking for the
5 Aspire Academy system. And I do believe that it will
6 allow them to be more efficient in the future.

7 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Mr. Davis.

8 MR. DAVIS: I vote yes, in order to provide a
9 streamlined approach to the administration and better
10 coordination between the schools on the various
11 campuses.

12 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Ms. Saracini.

13 MS. SARACINI: I support the approval to merge,
14 change grade spans, and increase enrollment cap.
15 This will streamline efficiency across all schools.

16 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: And Dr. Flowers.

17 DR. FLOWERS: I support the approval of the
18 Friendship Aspire merger request and proposed
19 enrollment caps. I look forward to hearing about how
20 your newly implemented and streamlined procedures
21 will have a positive impact on educational
22 experiences of your students.

23 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: All right. Thank you,
24 everyone. And congratulations, Friendship.

25 MS. HENRY: Thank you.

1 DR. TRAN: Thank you, Ms. Coffman.

2 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, everyone.

3 HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS

4 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Before we adjourn, just a
5 couple of housekeeping things.

6 We do have a June meeting scheduled. We have
7 two amendments on the agenda right now that will come
8 before you. That should be a very quick meeting.

9 And then we are planning to do some type of work
10 session, either at the end of June or early July. So
11 I'll ask Ms. Summons to send out a list of dates and
12 see what -- if everyone is available and any topics
13 that you would like for us to insure that we discuss
14 at that time. I know that our team has been
15 diligently working with our potential open-enrollment
16 and potential district conversions that are coming
17 in. We have had intents. They've been through
18 training and now they're working on their
19 applications. So they've put together a lot of
20 really good training that they can make available to
21 you, but we really do want to make sure that we're
22 answering questions and conserving time to really get
23 to the questions that you have. So when Ms. Summons
24 reaches out to you, if you'll be very explicit in
25 what you do want to know more about, what

1 conversations you would like to have with the Charter
2 Panel members. That way, we can kind of schedule and
3 make the best use of your time. Also, if you'll let
4 her know if you would like for that to be a face-to-
5 face conversation or a Zoom conversation, we will
6 provide whatever the Charter Panel members would like
7 to have so that it best meets your needs as well.

8 Anything else you would add?

9 MS. SUMMONS: No.

10 ADJOURNMENT

11 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Okay. All right. Then I'll
12 accept a motion to adjourn.

13 MS. SARACINI: I make a motion to adjourn.

14 DR. FLOWERS: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: I have a motion and a second
16 to adjourn.

17 All those in favor?

18 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

19 CHAIRMAN COFFMAN: Thank you, everyone. Have a
20 great day. Meeting is adjourned.

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24 (The meeting was concluded at 9:32 a.m.)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SALINE)

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing proceedings was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Charter Authorizing Panel, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 17, 2022; that the said proceedings was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of all proceedings had in said matter.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I have no contract with any parties within this action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial agency, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: May 20, 2022.

SHARON K. HILL, CCR
Certified Court Reporter
Certificate No. 670

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