

CHARTER AUTHORIZING PANEL

JUNE 18, 2024
9:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

PANEL MEMBERS:

DR. MATTHEW SUTHERLIN, Chairperson - Coordinator of
Standards Systems Support and Charter
MR. PHIL BALDWIN, Retired Bank Executive
MR. FREDDIE SCOTT - Family and Community Engagement, School
Choice and Parent Empowerment
DR. SONJA WRIGHT-McMURRAY, Associate Director -
Division of Career and Technical Education
DR. TINA MOORE, ADHE - Director of Workforce Development

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MS. DORIE SUMMONS, DESE Charter Schools Director
MR. STEPHEN REYNOLDS, Attorney Specialist - Elementary
and Secondary Education

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

I N D E X

	Page
Call to Order	3
Consent Agenda	3
Action Agenda	4
1. Fountain Lake Middle School Cobra Digital Prep Academy	5
2. Fort Smith Virtual Academy	7
3. Pinecrest Academy Fayetteville	21
4. CIVICA Career and Collegiate Academy Bentonville	21
5. Founders Classical Academies of Arkansas	42
6. Cabot Panther Academy	59
Adjournment	107
Court Reporter's Certificate	108

P R O C E E D I N G S**I. CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Good morning. The June 18, 2024 meeting of the Charter Authorizing Panel is called to order. I'd like to welcome everyone to the Department of Education and ask that you please silence all of your electronic devices. The goal is to facilitate a fair and responsible hearing, so therefore I ask that each person speak into the microphone clearly and state your title and name. I ask that you continue to speak clearly into the microphone throughout your presentation for the benefit of this panel, the audience, and the viewing audience.

I think we're getting a little feedback.

This meeting is being livestreamed and recorded, and a transcript of the meeting will be posted on the DESE website.

So good morning, everybody. Good morning, Panel Members.

II. CONSENT AGENDA

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And we do have a consent agenda item before us today. If there are no questions or objections, I'll accept a motion to pass the consent agenda item.

1 MR. BALDWIN: So moved.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. So I have a
4 motion by Mr. Baldwin and a second by Dr.
5 Wright-McMurray. All those in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

8 All right. The motion passes.

9 **III. ACTION AGENDA**

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Mr. Reynolds, would
11 you come forward to go over the procedures for us?

12 MR. REYNOLDS: Good morning. Stephen Reynolds,
13 Staff Attorney for the Department.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Good morning.

15 MR. REYNOLDS: Dr. Sutherlin, you'll want to
16 swear in all the parties, except for attorneys, that
17 will be giving testimony. The applicants will then
18 have 20 minutes to present their applications to
19 their amendment requests.

20 To my knowledge, there's no opposition for any
21 of the charters on the agenda. So after their
22 presentations you all can move into questions.

23 All parties, please state your name before you
24 speak, even if you talk for, so that we can have a
25 clear record. Any community members or community

1 partners that are here to speak on behalf of the
2 applicant will need to speak during their 20 minutes.
3 Any elected officials that are here can speak before
4 the hearing, during the 20 minutes, or at the
5 conclusion of all the testimony. That's up to the
6 official and the applicant how they want to move
7 forward.

8 Following the presentations we'll go through
9 legal concerns and waivers, if any. And you guys can
10 address any remaining concerns outside of legal.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you very much.

12 **III.1. FOUNTAIN LAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL COBRA DIGITAL PREP ACADEMY**

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Ms. Summons.

14 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning. Dorie Summons,
15 Office of Public Charter Schools.

16 The first school on the agenda is Fountain Lake
17 Middle School Cobra Digital Prep Academy. They are
18 rescinding their charter as of June 30, 2024, and all
19 waivers associated with the charter will be rescinded
20 at that time.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Is anyone here from the
22 charter to speak or --

23 All right. Thank you.

24 So we have a rescission of a charter.

25 I think we're still getting some feedback.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

We'll pause for just a minute.

Testing. Good. Thank you.

Do I hear a motion to approve?

MR. SCOTT: So moved.

DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So it's been moved by Mr. Scott and seconded by Dr. Wright-McMurray.

All those in favor.

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

All right. The motion passes. We'll fill out our voting sheets and we'll be back with you in just a second.

(A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll start with Dr. Moore.

DR. MOORE: I approve the request to rescind the Fountain Lake Middle School Cobra Digital Prep Academy charter and all associated waivers.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

Mr. Baldwin.

MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I voted in favor of this request to rescind the charter as of June 30, 2024.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

MR. SCOTT: I voted for the decision of Fountain

1 Lake Middle School Cobra Digital Prep Academy because
2 of respect of their decision to identify the
3 readiness of their team to move forward in a
4 meaningful way for the benefit of the students and
5 community they serve.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

7 And Dr. Wright-McMurray.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. I support
9 Fountain Lake Middle School Cobra Digital Prep
10 Academy's request to rescind the charter and all
11 associated waivers.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And then I voted for the
13 motion to rescind the Fountain Lake Middle School
14 charter.

15 So thank you very much.

16 **III.2. FORT SMITH VIRTUAL ACADEMY**

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Ms. Summons.

18 MS. SUMMONS: The next school on the agenda is
19 Fort Smith Virtual Academy. Fort Smith Virtual
20 Academy is requesting to change the current grade
21 levels served from grades K-12 to grades 6-12. And
22 we have Ms. Samantha Hall here from the district.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
24 much.

25 MS. HALL: Hi.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Hi.

2 MS. HALL: Samantha Hall from Fort Smith Virtual
3 Academy.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And --

5 MS. HALL: Oh, that's right.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- if you will raise your
7 right hand --

8 MS. HALL: Swear in.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So all those that are going
10 to speak on behalf of the charter, if you'll raise
11 your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony
12 you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth
13 and nothing but the truth?

14 MS. HALL: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
16 much. You may begin.

17 MS. HALL: I don't have a formal presentation.
18 I'm really just here to answer questions and just to
19 reiterate that we are wanting to move forward with
20 6-12, but our K-5 enrollment is so small that we're
21 not effectively utilizing our resources, specifically
22 our teachers. We're -- it's very intensive to use
23 three teachers for such a small number of students.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Do I have any questions?

25 Mr. Scott.

1 MR. SCOTT: Yes. Just of interest is -- I
2 understand the decision to focus on those meaningful
3 grades from an enrollment perspective. Could you --
4 the journey relative to the K-5, could you share with
5 us any data that you have with regards to outreach
6 to parents and their decisions, any kind of evals
7 that were associated with that decision?

8 MS. HALL: I don't have anything specific with
9 me. We were -- worked very closely with our parents
10 in that -- in that group. The enrollment declined
11 each year, and honestly, we were only going to have
12 14 students in grades K-5 next year and over half of
13 those were from three families with multiple
14 students.

15 MR. SCOTT: Okay. In many cases it's the
16 parents' role to participate --

17 MS. HALL: Uh-huh.

18 MR. SCOTT: -- just wondering your --

19 MS. HALL: Yes.

20 MR. SCOTT: -- findings in that regards.

21 MS. HALL: Yes. Yes. And this -- this --
22 what's your specific question on that?

23 MR. SCOTT: In regards to K-5 --

24 MS. HALL: Uh-huh.

25 MR. SCOTT: -- at the end of the day --

1 MS. HALL: Yes.

2 MR. SCOTT: -- as you move to 6-12, you're still
3 going to have a virtual environment --

4 MS. HALL: Oh, yes.

5 MR. SCOTT: -- to have parents that are uniquely
6 involved?

7 MS. HALL: Oh, definitely. Definitely. And
8 these were great parents that were very involved in
9 our K-5 program. And there's a couple of 4th graders
10 that they're already planning to bring them back when
11 they get to 6th grade in two years, so --

12 MR. SCOTT: Okay. And the last one is just
13 lessons learned for those that are aspiring to the
14 virtual in the elementary ranks, any lessons
15 learned?

16 MS. HALL: It is very labor intensive in that
17 with the youngest kids -- to teach them basic
18 reading, writing, math skills, interpersonal skills
19 as well, we brought them on campus occasionally --
20 and just learning those things like how to conduct
21 themselves in a public space, things like that. It
22 requires a lot of small group attention. So the
23 small environment was good. It just got too small.
24 But you have -- we can't do it with less teachers.
25 We could, but we looked at that, like having one

1 teacher for K-6. But we couldn't do that with
2 fidelity because we need the youngest kids to have
3 multiple times throughout the day -- they need that
4 interactions with the teachers and they need the
5 support at home. It is just very -- it's a true
6 partnership and it's a very intensive partnership.

7 MR. SCOTT: Okay. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

9 MR. BALDWIN: So kind of a similar question
10 coming from the other end. What is your enrollment
11 in the 6-12?

12 MS. HALL: Last year it was -- the 6-12 part was
13 about 110 or so, because we had 137 -- and I believe
14 -- I guess, it was closer to 117 because we had about
15 20 kids K-5. That was going to drop down to 14 this
16 year. And so we are anticipating -- we graduated 12
17 seniors. All of our seniors did graduate, so that
18 was -- that was definite positive that we had 100
19 percent graduation of our students that finished the
20 digital year with us. So --

21 MR. BALDWIN: When you -- when you have -- when
22 you look at the future of 6-12 classes how do kids
23 come into your virtual setting? I mean, a lot of
24 times in traditional you feed up from the bottom
25 grades. So that doesn't happen here?

1 MS. HALL: Correct. What we have found is a lot
2 of these kids did continue with us. But also that
3 transition from elementary to middle school and from
4 the middle school to high school, those are the two
5 places we see the most student enrollment -- new
6 student enrollment with the virtual, instead of just
7 continuing students, as -- either right before that
8 happens, in anticipation, or in the first couple of
9 weeks of the school year when they make that
10 transition. And for whatever reason, overwhelming
11 or large environment or whatever is different. But,
12 you know, they're going from very small neighborhood
13 middle schools -- or not very small, but small. We
14 have 18 neighborhood middle schools -- or
15 elementaries to four traditional middle schools. So
16 we're feeding a lot of kids into it. And then same
17 thing as they go from the four middle schools to the
18 high school situation.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. What is the authorized
20 number of students in your 6-12?

21 MS. HALL: What is --

22 MR. BALDWIN: Authorized number of students, the
23 maximum you could --

24 MS. HALL: Our whole enrollment was set to be
25 500. I believe we had it set at 35 in a class --

1 well, that was teacher load. Overall, it was 500.
2 And then a teacher -- maximum teacher load was around
3 35, except in the large -- per class period.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So is your goal to get --
5 now that you're going to focus on that grade level,
6 your goal to get closer to the 500?

7 MS. HALL: Yes. That is our goal is to, yes, to
8 focus on that, maybe closer to about 400 probably,
9 even without the elementary, because that was
10 including having an elementary component to that.

11 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

12 MS. HALL: Which would not be as large as our
13 6-12 component from the beginning. It wasn't a true
14 equitable half-and-half, but --

15 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. One last question. The
16 financial impact of this, the financial budgeting,
17 have you all done that? Is it a positive --

18 MS. HALL: Yes.

19 MR. BALDWIN: -- effect?

20 MS. HALL: It's definite -- because we have
21 three teachers with such a small number of students
22 those teachers will all return back to our
23 traditional classrooms within the district. And with
24 6-12 we will be able to pare down a smaller staff and
25 the majority of our students are in 6-12. So we

1 won't be losing as much -- very much funding compared
2 to the amount that we'll save in teacher salaries
3 alone.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore.

6 DR. MOORE: Sure.

7 Thanks for being here today. I have a question
8 that's actually not related to why you're here.

9 MS. HALL: Okay.

10 DR. MOORE: But since you're here, I was just
11 curious as your virtual academy continues and the
12 focus is on your secondary students primarily, what
13 are you doing to ensure those students have
14 opportunities for concurrent credit and career and
15 technical education?

16 MS. HALL: Okay. Great question because that is
17 something that we are -- that we've really looked at
18 as an area of need this past year. This was our
19 first year with the high school, so that was a big,
20 huge chunk to bite off. But that is one of the first
21 things we found. So we -- we partner with Virtual
22 Arkansas for our curriculum and they offer concurrent
23 through Arkansas Tech. So we have had those meetings
24 also with UAFS, that there's no conflict with us
25 partnering with the Virtual Arkansas and their

1 Arkansas Tech partnership since it is set-up for full
2 virtual. And our partnership with UAFS in Fort Smith
3 is typically an onsite partnership where the
4 professors either come to campus or we use teachers.
5 So we've got that settled.

6 Career technical, Dr. Udouj -- I actually work
7 with him and he is our director of our career and
8 technical. And that is another thing that we are --
9 we -- one of our big discussions on the way down here
10 is talking about being able to now -- we have CTE as
11 part of our charter, so we're already doing that in
12 terms of 6-7-8. And now that we're adding on the
13 9-10, lead up to some programs at PEAK, even though
14 they're full virtual for students or they might not
15 want to go onsite at Northside or Southside. That
16 doesn't mean that they would not want to be part of
17 either the WATC program or the PEAK programs, the
18 big difference being whether they're through a
19 university or through Fort Smith schools. But those
20 are some of the things we're looking for in their
21 student success plans, as well as being able to offer
22 those programs.

23 DR. MOORE: All right. Thanks so much.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And then I just have one
25 question about in terms of the reasons. I mean you

1 listed some of the reasons that they end up coming
2 over at 6th grade --

3 MS. HALL: Uh-huh.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- or even after. Do you
5 have hard data yet to support that, like a survey or
6 anything that would -- would support? I'm just
7 thinking in terms of identifying those students to
8 make sure that they are getting the best possible
9 options.

10 MS. HALL: You know, I honestly don't. I have,
11 like -- I have surveys in terms of, you know, like,
12 from the program itself, but not as of why they made
13 the transition. So that is something we would need
14 to -- we would need to start looking at, because, no,
15 we have not. And we also do get students throughout
16 the year for other reasons, medical exceptions --

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Right.

18 MS. HALL: -- being a huge one.

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: That's something -- yeah,
20 something to think about. Because, I mean --

21 MS. HALL: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- I think that would --
23 could help you identify who might benefit best from
24 -- from your programs, so --

25 MS. HALL: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

2 MS. HALL: I agree.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

4 MS. HALL: That's a great idea.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh. Any other
6 questions?

7 All right.

8 MR. SCOTT: I do.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Oh, go ahead.

10 MR. SCOTT: Just --

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Sure.

12 MR. SCOTT: Just real quick. The -- we
13 appreciate the decision relative to (indiscernible)
14 sharing looking at the numbers. There's still a
15 responsibility when it comes to grades going all the
16 way to graduation to handle community service
17 learning --

18 MS. HALL: Yes.

19 MR. SCOTT: -- for graduation and also student
20 success plans.

21 MS. HALL: Yes.

22 MR. SCOTT: Help me to understand your plan
23 going forward to address those in a virtual
24 environment.

25 MS. HALL: We actually have a teacher -- we --

1 in addition to our core, some of our teachers have
2 gotten cross-certified or are in the process of doing
3 that. I have a teacher that does our Keystone class,
4 which is required for graduation, that's required for
5 our 8th graders. And that is during the course of
6 that class they develop their student success plan.
7 So she's working directly with them, and she is also
8 going to be the person that is in charge of the
9 community service learning and that helps work with
10 those students, both in providing opportunities and
11 tracking their hours over the next four years. And
12 she's also working on getting the certification to do
13 the internship class as well, so that we can offer
14 internships. We're just starting to explore that.
15 She's also my science teacher who does both
16 biological and physical science, so she is -- and she
17 was a Fort Smith teacher of the year in the past.
18 She's an amazing -- all of my staff is phenomenal, I
19 will say that. But she is -- she is definitely
20 focused and willing to do that and it's very helpful
21 for me that she is so focused on that. And she's
22 already got the community service learning. We've
23 already gotten some stuff started, some -- some
24 things that they've given kids opportunities to
25 volunteer for just within the schools.

1 MR. SCOTT: I appreciate that. There's
2 definitely a direct linkage between a plan -- success
3 plan and also developing your community partners.

4 MS. HALL: Yes.

5 MR. SCOTT: And the ideal, if indeed the
6 learning -- community service learning opportunities
7 really align with their career aspirations and your
8 partners to be able to address that.

9 MS. HALL: Yes. That's a great idea too. Yeah.
10 I hadn't thought about that part.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. If there are no
12 other questions, I'll accept a motion.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I move approval.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. I have --

15 DR. MOORE: I second.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I have a motion from Dr.
17 Wright-McMurray and a second from Dr. Moore.

18 All those in favor?

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

21 Any abstentions?

22 All right. We will take just a few minutes to
23 fill out our voting sheets and we'll get right back
24 to you.

25 MS. HALL: Thank you.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

(A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll start with Dr. Wright-McMurray.

DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. I support Fort Smith Virtual's request to change their charter to change grade levels served from K-12 to 6-12.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

MR. SCOTT: I voted for the amendment request of Fort Smith Virtual because of their careful consideration of fiduciary responsibility and focus on continued success for the students and engagement with both the families and the community partners.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I support the request to change the grade levels from K-12 to 6-12. This change allows the school to focus on a more traditional student base for virtual academies and will improve the financial position of the school.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore.

DR. MOORE: I support the request of Fort Smith Virtual Academy to change the current grade levels served from grades K-12 to grades 6-12. I encourage the charter to take this opportunity to focus on the narrow scope of grade level to deepen student core learning and increase access to and participation in

1 CTE and early postsecondary credit.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And then I voted for the
3 motion to change the grade level of Fort Smith
4 Virtual Academy to 6-12. The charter has identified
5 areas in which it can better serve students and focus
6 its efforts on its mission. I look forward to
7 hearing about the data as it relates to reasons for
8 attendance and its application to the identification
9 of students that would best benefit from the
10 charter's model.

11 So, congratulations.

12 MS. HALL: Thank you.

13 **III.3. PINECREST ACADEMY FAYETTEVILLE**

14 **III.4. CIVICA CAREER AND COLLEGIATE ACADEMY BENTONVILLE**

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Ms. Summons.
16 Okay.

17 MS. SUMMONS: Okay. Next, we'll have Pinecrest
18 Academy Fayetteville. They're requesting to defer
19 the school start date to August 2025. And Ms. Lima
20 is on -- is online.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

22 Ms. Lima?

23 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Ms. Lima, are you there?

25 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. I think we're having
2 some -- some audio issues. Ms. Lima, we're going to
3 get with you in just a second.

4 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

5 MS. LIMA: Hello? Can you hear me?

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Is that coming through your
7 computer or --

8 Okay. Okay.

9 MS. LIMA: Hello?

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: We can hear you. I think
11 maybe the volume is just a little bit low. So
12 they're going to adjust that real quick.

13 MS. LIMA: Okay. No problem.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Can you try now for us,
15 please?

16 MS. LIMA: Yes. Can you hear me?

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Perfect.

18 MS. LIMA: Great. Thank you so much.

19 My name is Adri Lima. I'm representing
20 Pinecrest Academy and actually CIVICA as well this
21 morning on behalf of Mr. Alvarez.

22 Yes. Pinecrest Academy of Arkansas is
23 requesting a --

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Ms. Lima?

25 MS. LIMA: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Sorry to -- sorry to pause
2 you but we need to swear you in first. Sorry.

3 So if you'll raise your right hand.

4 MS. LIMA: Oh, yes. Sorry.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Do you swear that the
6 testimony you're about to give is the truth, the
7 whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

8 MS. LIMA: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. You may begin.

10 MS. LIMA: My name is Adri Lima and I'm
11 representing Pinecrest Academy this morning.

12 Pinecrest Academy is in fact requesting a
13 deferral to open the school for the 2025 school year
14 (Zoom audio cuts out) partners have not been able to
15 identify a suitable facility. And obviously we know
16 facilities are very important and usually this is the
17 tougher piece. Searches have been far and wide. And
18 while there were some options on the table just
19 timeline-wise we do want to be sure that we give the
20 community enough time to hear about the school, that
21 we identify the right site.

22 And so with that, we are requesting to be able
23 to open in 2025.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

25 Dr. Wright-McMurray, do you have any questions?

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I guess just one quick --
2 one question that I have.

3 We're still echoing.

4 So do you feel confident that given the
5 extension you'll be able to find two locations for
6 opening your schools? Sorry I'm a little distracted
7 by the echo.

8 MS. LIMA: So if we're -- sorry. Yes, we're
9 referring to CIVICA and Pinecrest. Yeah, I would say
10 yes. You know, obviously it has been difficult to
11 identify one, but we feel that we've made some
12 progress in the last month. And really what happened
13 is that it came down to the timing. And you never
14 really want to just start the process over the
15 summer. We know families that we've traditionally --
16 from the networks that -- that we're discussing,
17 these families are looking into schools, you know,
18 October, November, December, January of the year
19 prior to school opening. And so, yes, we feel that
20 over, you know, the summer and the next -- and the --
21 and the fall we can identify sites. Obviously, we
22 cannot confirm, right, that we will find two sites
23 that are perfect for -- for these schools. But that
24 is absolutely the intent.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Just [audio distortion] --

1 so once the site is identified, do they just go
2 forward with that or do we get a chance to get any
3 feedback on where they're selecting? Or how does
4 that work?

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I -- I think that's up to
6 the CAP to decide. So if -- if the motion were made
7 that we wanted to review the site prior to them
8 actually being able to open in 2025, we could make
9 such a motion.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: What -- how does that
11 normally --

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I mean, it would just be
13 part of the motion.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's all I have.

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

18 MR. SCOTT: I would think that there -- there
19 are quality decisions with regards to the facility or
20 location. Their numbers, financials the Chairman
21 will take a look at to insure that there is enough
22 percentage towards student learning that goes on.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

24 MR. SCOTT: But you won't know that until you
25 have a fully signed agreement/facility

1 utilization agreement.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh. So do you have any
3 questions, Mr. Scott?

4 MR. SCOTT: Other than that, I -- I -- I believe
5 what I heard -- and forgive me if it's kind of
6 difficult to understand. But I believe what I heard
7 was that there's still a question about what that
8 site would look like.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

10 MR. SCOTT: So there's still data for us to
11 assess; right?

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes.

13 Mr. Baldwin.

14 MR. BALDWIN: And so I -- I sympathize with you
15 on trying to find a site. That's always hard. And
16 especially up in northwest Arkansas there's a lot of
17 activity up there.

18 So, I guess, my question would be to ask who all
19 is involved in the site selection process. Do you
20 have real estate professionals? Are they contracted
21 or are they folks that are part of the school, maybe
22 school board members? Just walk us through the folks
23 that are helping you with this decision.

24 And then -- and then also maybe tell us when you
25 began to become concerned about hitting the date this

1 year. I'd be -- I'd be interested in knowing how
2 long of a time frame that's been.

3 MS. LIMA: Yes. So we received [audio
4 distortion] actually before I would say because we
5 received approval for the application, the boards
6 engaged -- well, and with the help of the ESP, we
7 have real estate professionals within our
8 organization. And also, we're reaching out to
9 brokers, local brokers in those areas. So we visit
10 sites. Many sites were visited, trips were taken
11 over there to see facilities on various occasions.
12 And so it's a combination of local developers and
13 real estate brokers in combination with the members
14 from the governing board or really the CMO for CIVICA
15 and Pinecrest who has overseen the expansion of
16 [audio distortion]. And representatives from the
17 local board.

18 And so as far as when were -- when did we begin
19 to be concerned, I mean, you know, ideally you
20 identify a site a year out. So I wouldn't -- you
21 know, I'd say by the time that it crept to around
22 January, February, March, it's a little tight. And
23 so I would say around that time. But then, you know,
24 we -- we kind of kept holding out hope and other
25 facilities kept kind of coming up. But then the

1 concern there is timing with regard to families,
2 holding those community meetings, getting that
3 interest, and then being able to enroll, you know,
4 the members that we're targeting.

5 So I don't know if that helps answer your
6 question a little bit.

7 MR. BALDWIN: It did. It did. Thank you. And
8 I would just -- I will just say that it's important
9 to have the right professional help, and up -- up
10 there there's, you know, a lot of folks that you
11 shouldn't use and there are some really good ones.
12 So I would -- I would encourage you to make sure that
13 you've got the right team in place.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore.

15 DR. MOORE: Yeah. I'm sorry if you've already
16 addressed this. It's -- the sound is a little
17 difficult.

18 What about students who were planning to attend
19 your facility or your charter, have you helped to
20 call any of them since they may have missed out on
21 registering in time for some others that had a
22 limited access and that was already taken? Like,
23 what have you done to serve any students who may have
24 planned on attending this fall?

25 MS. LIMA: [audio distortion] because I'm

1 getting an echo.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I'm sorry. Can you repeat
3 that?

4 MS. LIMA: I was asking if she can repeat the
5 question because I was -- there's a lot of feedback
6 and I couldn't understand.

7 DR. MOORE: Sure. For students who had planned
8 to attend your charter this fall -- maybe if I say it
9 slower it'll help -- have you helped them find other
10 opportunities? Because it may have been too late
11 for them to make the cut for some of the charters
12 that have limited seats?

13 MS. LIMA: To -- no. [audio distortion] you
14 that we did not enroll, and we would never enroll
15 students in a school without having a facility
16 identified. So we did not enroll any students. But
17 the work that was done with regard to ads and getting
18 interest was solely based on interest and not at all
19 based on submitting an application for a school.
20 Once we have a facility identified, at that point is
21 when the engagement and marketing would happen in
22 order to enroll students. So we did not have any
23 students enrolled for a school obviously that we did
24 not have a site for.

25 DR. MOORE: Okay. And I didn't think you had

1 them enrolled necessarily. I just didn't know if
2 people were [audio distortion] -- never mind.

3 MS. LIMA: There are no families displaced if
4 that helps. We did not -- we have an interest list
5 that we had from when we ran some ads. But, again,
6 those were -- were halted, and so we knew really
7 where we were going to put these sites. And so we do
8 not have any families that thought that they were
9 going to enroll in specific schools, if that helps.

10 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

11 MR. SCOTT: I'd like to just piggyback on that,
12 because I think a portion of what you shared is a
13 part of a revised marketing and recruitment plan of
14 sorts. You target a particular date and there's
15 still activity. I understand the challenge relative
16 to identifying a facility and location and things of
17 that nature. But if you could step us through what
18 your plans are for the marketing and recruitment
19 standpoint, given that your request is a year out,
20 that will be helpful.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And just to add on to that,
22 if you could give us kind of a full scope of a
23 timeline of what you're looking at. Because I think
24 you addressed it briefly, but I couldn't quite hear
25 it just because our sound was off. So if you could

1 address your timeline and then what your marketing
2 and recruitment plan is.

3 MS. LIMA: Sure. The facility identification
4 will be ongoing. So once the facility can be
5 identified, or actually prior, we have right now for
6 both schools -- and I'm sorry that I'm speaking for
7 both items. But what we have right now is sort of a
8 landing page. The idea is by the end of this year to
9 build out the full website for each school. And then
10 once those websites are built out, we will run
11 digital ads, Google responsive ads, social media ads.

12 Ideally, if we have -- a facility is identified
13 we'll place site signs immediately and begin holding
14 parent interest meetings at the site. If the site is
15 not suitable, if it's not ready, if we're not able to
16 host -- you know, if we don't have a CO or a TCO, we
17 would host events offsite, somewhere nearby; we'd
18 have renderings of the facility. We typically would
19 be -- both of these networks will look into what sort
20 of festivals or community events are being held in
21 the surrounding area, sponsor a table or reach out
22 and see how we can take part in those. We'd reach
23 out to local churches, museums, community centers,
24 the nearby preschools, I guess, you know, that we
25 would be enrolling in kindergarten. We'd look at

1 those daycares and preschools and see if they would
2 allow us to host meetings for their families to
3 invite them and that there's a new school coming to
4 their area.

5 And so all of this would start happening -- the
6 typical timeline is that it begins happening around
7 October or November of the year prior to the school
8 opening, up until -- you know, and registration would
9 begin -- all depending on how we feel about the site
10 -- but really around January and February where you'd
11 have those initial and secondary registration times
12 and lotteries.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Other questions?

14 Well, if there are no other questions I'll
15 entertain a motion.

16 MR. BALDWIN: May I ask a question of the Panel?

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Sure.

18 MR. BALDWIN: So I'm thinking that in order to
19 open up in July or to be ready to go in '25, it would
20 be good to have a building right now or have a
21 contract on a building. And I guess my personal
22 thought would be to ask Pinecrest to come back with a
23 specific plan and, you know, talk to us about it;
24 who is it, you know, specifically the names of who's
25 involved, you know, where they are. Give a little

1 bit more detail. We don't really have anything to
2 look at, other than just a conversation that's very
3 hard to hear. And I don't want to burden the school,
4 but I think since one deadline has been missed I
5 think another one can be missed too real easily
6 because the time can go fast. And then that's maybe
7 my personal opinion, but how do you guys think about
8 that?

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Well, I can support that.
10 That was, I guess, with my first question, kind of
11 where I was trying to get my thoughts fleshed out on
12 -- because of the time frame of having to identify a
13 location and then have enough time to appropriately
14 share that information with the public and get
15 students enrolled it gets pretty tight. And so
16 that's why I did ask the initial question, do we feel
17 confident that just giving another year is going to
18 provide adequate time because we are now basically
19 in July. So I would appreciate an opportunity to see
20 a revised timeline.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And do you have a time
22 frame that you would think you would want them to
23 return, if there were a motion made in that vein?
24 What are we thinking about?

25 MR. SCOTT: If we say -- if we do one thing,

1 they're on point to start this year. Correct?

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Well, no. No. No, I think
3 we should --

4 MR. SCOTT: They said '25.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: But I'm saying that the
6 motion could be to push it out to '25 with the
7 stipulation that there is a report back to us at a
8 certain date. And if we did something of that
9 nature, then that would enable us to then check on
10 progress to see where we are, to make sure that we
11 meet that '25 deadline.

12 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. That's what I was thinking.
13 And maybe I recall the plan -- you know, a fairly
14 comprehensive plan of -- that ties in the marketing
15 outreach and the -- you know, the site selection and
16 plans once you get the site, how long will it take to
17 hire contractors, you know. You know, because I know
18 there's -- there's delays up there. You know, I mean
19 there's just massive delays because everybody is so
20 busy. So I think some type of formal document in
21 writing that we can look at and maybe even an
22 in-person presentation so we can have a conversation.

23 MR. SCOTT: I'd certainly agree. And I would
24 include that request to understand the -- if they
25 have their community and public meetings, what kind

1 of support they have from families that are
2 interested.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore, did you have
4 anything you wanted to add?

5 DR. MOORE: Yes. I agree. And just curious
6 what we think the best time frame would be? I would
7 assume that they would need a few months. So
8 sometime in the fall but --

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

10 DR. MOORE: -- before December.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And --

12 DR. MOORE: I don't know what our meeting
13 schedule is like in October or November.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And so we have new charters
15 and renewals coming up in -- like, at the beginning
16 of the fall. If we were to say -- let me think --
17 October -- or does that sound feasible?

18 Okay.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Is that -- is that enough time for
20 Pinecrest?

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Is that enough time for you
22 all to have a plan in place?

23 MS. LIMA: That's fine. And we're happy to
24 provide you with any documentation and updated
25 timeline between now and then. And then we can -- if

1 you'd like us -- so if you'd like us to come back to
2 the Panel in October, that's sounds fine to me.

3 And just to confirm is the motion meant today to
4 grant the referral based on the submittal of the
5 updated timeline?

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So there's no motion on the
7 -- on the table at this moment, but -- it's just
8 discussion at this point. But if -- if that were the
9 case, if the motion were made -- I -- I think it's
10 going to depend on how that motion is -- is phrased.
11 But we could, the pleasure of the Panel, could allow
12 it for deferment until 2025, with the stipulation
13 that you come back in October and actually provide
14 that plan to us and the updates on -- on the
15 building.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah. My thought is the updates,
17 what are going to in '24. So I think we should --

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

19 MR. BALDWIN: -- grant the deferral subject to
20 the results of -- of the report they give us.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah. So is that a motion?

22 MR. BALDWIN: I make that as a motion.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

24 Do I have --

25 DR. MOORE: Second.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. I got two seconds.

3 Okay. So I have a motion --

4 MR. REYNOLDS: I hate to interrupt --

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

6 MR. REYNOLDS: Just to be clear, I know there's
7 a lot of discussion about both Pinecrest and CIVICA.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: This is just for Pinecrest.

9 MR. REYNOLDS: But since they're separate
10 charters --

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

12 MR. REYNOLDS: -- we need to have separate
13 motions.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Right.

15 MR. REYNOLDS: Okay.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So this one is -- is
17 strictly for Pinecrest.

18 MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. I just wanted to be -- be
19 clear.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes.

21 Okay. So I have a motion by Mr. Baldwin and a
22 second by Dr. Moore and Dr. Wright-McMurray. All
23 those --

24 DR. MOORE: We feel strongly about this.

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes. All those in favor?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

Any abstentions?

All right. We'll fill out our voting sheets and we'll be back with you in just a moment.

And just to be clear, the motion was for you to defer the opening until 2025 and come back in October with a report and a plan concerning the building.

(A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. I support Pinecrest Preparatory Academy's request to defer their opening date until August 2025, with the stipulation that they present a progress report and amended plan of implementation by the October CAP meeting.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

MR. SCOTT: I voted for Pinecrest Prep Academy's request to defer the start date till August 2025 with the stipulation for return to the CAP with more intel on facilities and community support during the future fall CAP meeting.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Mr. Baldwin.

MR. BALDWIN: I voted in favor of opening date deferral to August 2025, subject to completion of a

1 comprehensive plan of opening submitted to the
2 Charter Panel in October 2024.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And Dr. Moore.

4 DR. MOORE: I support Pinecrest Preparatory
5 Academy's request to defer the school start date till
6 August '25, pending charter leadership providing an
7 updated timeline and progress report during the
8 October 2024 CAP meeting.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And then I voted for the
10 motion to defer opening Pinecrest Preparatory
11 Academy until the fall of 2025. I look forward to
12 hearing the progress made towards acquiring a
13 building and the recruitment of students.

14 All right. Thank you very much.

15 Ms. Lima, do you have anything else you would
16 like to add in relation to CIVICA?

17 MS. LIMA: No. The same -- all of the same
18 would apply for CIVICA. So we can update -- we are
19 happy to update with regard to timeline and
20 facilities search in October. You know, same updated
21 timeline with regard to marketing and outreach --
22 approximately same time. So if there -- I'm happy to
23 answer any other questions if there are any separate
24 questions regarding CIVICA. But essentially the same
25 updates would apply.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Any questions
2 from the Panel?

3 Do I have a motion?

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I move that we support the
5 request, again with the stipulation that they return
6 in the fall to provide a progress report and an
7 amended plan of communication.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

9 DR. MOORE: I'll second.

10 MR. BALDWIN: I'll second.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. So it's been moved
12 by Dr. Wright-McMurray and seconded by Mr. Baldwin
13 and Dr. Moore. All those in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

16 Any abstentions?

17 All right. The motion passes.

18 Give us just a few minutes to fill this out and
19 we'll get right back to you.

20 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: We'll start on this end
22 with Dr. Moore.

23 DR. MOORE: I support CIVICA Career and
24 Collegiate Academy's request to defer the school
25 start date until August '25, pending charter

1 leadership providing an updated timeline and progress
2 report during the October 2024 CAP meeting.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

4 MR. BALDWIN: I support the CIVICA deferral
5 request to move the opening to August 2025, subject
6 to the submission of a school start plan to the CAP
7 in October 2024.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

9 MR. SCOTT: I voted for the CIVICA Career and
10 College Academy's request to defer the start date
11 till August 2025, with the stipulation of return to
12 the CAP with more intel on facilities and community
13 support during the future fall CAP meeting.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And Dr. Wright-McMurray.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. I voted for. I
16 support CIVICA Career and College Academy/
17 Bentonville's request to defer their start date to
18 August 2025, with the stipulation that they present a
19 progress report and amended plan of implementation at
20 the October CAP meeting.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And then I voted for the
22 motion to defer opening of CIVICA Career and
23 Collegiate Academy until the fall of 2025. I look
24 forward to hearing the progress made towards
25 acquiring a building and the recruitment of students.

1 All right. Thank you very much. We appreciate
2 you.

3 MS. LIMA: Thank you all for your time.

4 **III.5. FOUNDERS CLASSICAL ACADEMIES OF ARKANSAS**

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Ms. Summons.

6 MS. SUMMONS: Next, we have Founders Classical
7 Academies of Arkansas. They're requesting to amend
8 the grade levels served at the Founders Classical
9 Academy Online campus from grades K-12 to grades
10 7-12. They're also asking to amend the grade levels
11 served at the Founders Classical Academy/Bentonville
12 campus from grades K-7 to grades K-8. And they're
13 also asking to change the name of Founders Classical
14 Academy Online to iSchool Virtual Academy of
15 Arkansas and close the Founders Classical Academy
16 Online Elementary.

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

18 MS. SUMMONS: And Ms. Provenza is here this
19 morning representing Founders.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

21 All right. Will those of you who plan on
22 speaking on behalf of the tartar -- charter stand and
23 raise your right hand. All right. Do you swear that
24 the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the
25 whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

(ALL SPEAKERS ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY)

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very much. You may begin.

MS. PROVENZA: Good morning. Thank you very much for having us here. I appreciate your time. My name is Susan Provenza and I'm the state director for Founders Classical Academies of Arkansas. And I recognize all of you guys, so maybe you recognize me.

I'm going to try to make this go. Let's see here.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: You might have to turn that -- yeah.

MS. PROVENZA: I may need to stand on one foot and hold my mouth right. All right.

CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: There -- there it goes.

MS. PROVENZA: Move around a little bit. Thank you. Appreciate it. Okay. That's fine.

All right. So our amendment overview -- we are asking to amend the grades offered at two of our campuses. The first one is FCA Online from K-12, we want to amend it to serve 7-12 starting in '24-'25. And at our Bentonville campus from K-7 to K-8, as originally presented to the Panel at the time of the Rogers campus addition. This is kind of a paperwork cleanup issue right here. And then our name change

1 is for Founders Classical Academies of Arkansas. We
2 are seeking to change the school name from Founders
3 Classical Academy Online to iSchool Virtual Academy
4 of Arkansas.

5 Our rationale for these changes for our FCA
6 Online we have had some low enrollment for the
7 elementary grades and we really want the ability to
8 focus heavily on growing that 7-12 program where it
9 is a better fit for students in terms of a virtual
10 learning environment.

11 For FCA Bentonville we actually originally
12 presented to the Panel and it was approved in 2020,
13 with the addition of our Founders Rogers campus.
14 That was a K-12 campus that we added, and we wanted
15 our campuses to feed into that high school there. It
16 was only included in the presentation and not the
17 actual amendment request. And so the purpose is so
18 that those two, Bentonville and Rogers, K-8 systems
19 can feed into the FCA Rogers high school, creating a
20 little bit bigger high school and offering the
21 students a little more opportunity. So, again, that
22 was -- that's kind of a paperwork cleanup. 2020 was
23 a crazy year, and so we just missed it in one spot.

24 Our current enrollment for our campuses -- you
25 can see here our Bentonville campus is K-7 right now

1 and we had 732 students this past year; our Rogers
2 campus K-6 had 522, 7-12 had 225; West Little Rock
3 K-6 had 51, 7-12 had 85; and our Online campus K-6
4 had 9, and 7-12, 21.

5 Rationale for the name change -- we really want
6 to place an emphasis on our collegiate program. It
7 is more college prep focused. It's got CTE and dual
8 credit components to it. And by -- by aligning it
9 with a brand that we're good at in Texas, as well, we
10 feel like that would be a really good move for us to
11 make. It's a competency-based education that meets
12 the individual needs of the students and then also
13 allows for advancement of coursework.

14 Our purpose is to provide students across the
15 state with a high-quality college preparatory virtual
16 education. That includes best digital learning
17 practices and adequate wraparound support on their
18 journey to high school graduation and further
19 education. We want to be able to provide flexibility
20 to students and families in their pursuit of a
21 college preparatory education. And we also want to
22 increase the impact of our academies across the
23 state.

24 So our intended outcomes -- we want our 7-12 --
25 I'm speaking about our virtual environment that we're

1 changing those grade levels on. We really want our
2 students engaged in a high-quality virtual program,
3 supported through best learning practices that allow
4 for active learning, effective content, authoring and
5 personalized lesson design methods. We want to
6 increase the percentage of Arkansans who are prepared
7 for higher education and we want to help students
8 prepare for a successful life beyond high school
9 through accelerated learning, concurrent courses,
10 workplace readiness, military career readiness, and
11 acceptance to university, college or other trade
12 schools.

13 So, again, our amendment request -- we want to
14 -- bless you -- amend the grades served in our
15 virtual academy from K-12 to 7-12. We want to amend
16 our Bentonville brick-and-mortar campus to add that
17 8th grade. And then we want to change the name of
18 our virtual academy to iSchool Virtual Academy of
19 Arkansas.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

21 So, Dr. Moore, do you have any questions?

22 DR. MOORE: I appreciate your rationale and what
23 you explained. I do just want to know, because when
24 someone hears classical academy that really typically
25 implies something to people, like that has like a

1 meaning.

2 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

3 DR. MOORE: Do you feel that that has changed in
4 what you're doing or do you still want people to view
5 it as that classical education?

6 MS. PROVENZA: So for our -- this is -- the name
7 change is only for that virtual online school --

8 DR. MOORE: Okay.

9 MS. PROVENZA: -- not our entire charter. No.
10 Our brick-and-mortars are staying classical. That is
11 much easier to do in person.

12 DR. MOORE: Right.

13 MS. PROVENZA: And -- and -- and we want our --
14 our virtual school to really embrace what it is.

15 DR. MOORE: Okay. So the virtual really was
16 truly the classical?

17 MS. PROVENZA: You know, we kind of attempted,
18 but it --

19 DR. MOORE: Okay.

20 MS. PROVENZA: -- it's pretty -- it's pretty
21 challenging. So we really want to go that more
22 collegiate path.

23 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you for that
24 clarification.

25 MS. PROVENZA: Yeah. Absolutely.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Baldwin.

2 MR. BALDIN: So two questions. One is as you
3 we're talking about the shifting of the grade levels
4 --

5 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

6 MR. BALDWIN: -- and kind of feeding up into the
7 high school, talk to us a little bit about the
8 student -- you know, from the student perspective,
9 their experience on -- on this change. How will that
10 impact the kids that are involved in the change?
11 And, I guess, you've talked with the families and the
12 parents and they -- are they supportive of this?

13 MS. PROVENZA: At our -- at our virtual school?

14 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

15 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Oh -- yes.

17 MS. PROVENZA: Yes. So -- so for our virtual
18 academy, yes. We have -- we are working with those
19 families to get those current elementary students who
20 are enrolled with us enrolled in other places. They
21 obviously have priority at our brick-and-mortar
22 campuses to attend there if they're nearby to one and
23 they want to. So, yes.

24 MR. BALDWIN: How many -- how many students is
25 that that are --

1 MS. PROVENZA: In that virtual elementary?

2 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

3 MS. PROVENZA: I think we had nine this past
4 year.

5 MR. BALDWIN: All right. Okay.

6 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh. Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I have one question
8 regarding --

9 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So you have your Premier
11 Online --

12 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- Academy. Will that stay
14 the same --

15 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- in the future or will --

17 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- will it move to this
19 model as well?

20 MS. PROVENZA: No. Well, I could call my
21 colleague up here, but I kind of think I can answer
22 for him. But, yes, Premier is going to stay focused
23 the same way they are now.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. I just -- just a
25 clarification question.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Mr. Scott.

MR. SCOTT: You spoke to, earlier, a decision -- quality decision to shift grade levels.

MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

MR. SCOTT: Help me understand the journey and the -- the -- the K-5 who no longer will be served by you.

MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

MR. SCOTT: What's happening with those families, those students, et cetera? Are they receiving any help in -- in placement elsewhere? At one point you surveyed, now you're not?

MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely. So we started this, our journey with virtual academies after 2020, and there was a pretty high demand at that point. And just as we -- as we've worked through it one of the things that we've realized is that often elementary families really want their students in a brick-and-mortar. And, honestly, it's probably better for them. Elementary students really thrive in an environment where they -- they have a little bit more of that social interaction and also that -- that just teacher -- teacher impact. And it's harder to achieve in a virtual elementary.

And so for our -- our families that are

1 currently enrolled with us we have been working
2 directly with those families to place them in other
3 schools. And like I said, they have priority in our
4 brick-and-mortars. If they want to transfer to one
5 of our brick-and-mortars, they can absolutely do
6 that. And then we're also just working to place them
7 to meet their needs.

8 MR. SCOTT: I appreciate that, because
9 originally when you applied the thought was K-12.

10 MS. PROVENZA: Right.

11 MR. SCOTT: No problem.

12 MS. PROVENZA: Yes.

13 MR. SCOTT: But you're experiencing challenges.

14 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

15 MR. SCOTT: Any additional challenges you were
16 faced with in serving that? I say that because
17 there's some great lessons learned for those who are
18 continuing to aspire to serve them virtually.

19 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. I can just really think
20 of all the components of what a virtual education
21 looks like for elementary students. And I think
22 maybe coming -- coming off the heels of 2020, we
23 might've had a vision for what it looked like, and
24 then, you know, as time goes by, and things change we
25 realized maybe that's not exactly what it looks like.

1 And so I think it is pretty challenging for
2 elementary students.

3 MR. SCOTT: Is the training or PD associated
4 with staff -- and then there's also perhaps relative
5 to the parents too to serve those students --

6 MS. PROVENZA: Uh-huh.

7 MR. SCOTT: -- describe a PD for both staff and
8 families.

9 MS. PROVENZA: Sure. So all of our teachers go
10 through pretty extensive professional development.
11 And obviously with our virtual educators, working on
12 best practices for what a virtual education looks
13 like, how to do that, how to keep students engaged
14 when they are at home and when they are -- are in
15 that virtual environment. And then for our families
16 it's also that -- that opportunity to talk to them
17 about what that partnership education looks like.
18 Because truly at the elementary level in a virtual
19 school it has to be a family partnership. Those
20 families have to be very, very engaged. And, I mean,
21 like any school, some are, and some aren't. And --
22 and so that's -- that's definitely a challenge.

23 MR. SCOTT: Okay. I think my last question
24 deals with the fact that you -- there's a lot of
25 energy around performance and your brand. So are you

1 confident in going forward that you still have that
2 impact that you need relative to the performance of
3 the students you serve?

4 MS. PROVENZA: Yes. For our -- for the -- for
5 the 7-12 in the -- in the virtual academy I -- I have
6 all the confidence in the world that we are going to
7 have some successful performance. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Oh. I'd just like to give
10 you an opportunity to speak a little bit more about
11 your CTE offerings and what pathways will be
12 available for students through the virtual --

13 MS. PROVENZA: Sure.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- component.

15 MS. PROVENZA: Absolutely.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

17 MS. PROVENZA: Do you have some details on that?

18 MR. FELTON: I mean, what -- what we've started
19 to do is partner with Virtual Arkansas, looking at
20 the courses they have. It just seems that we're --
21 we've been partnering with them in our
22 brick-and- mortar locations and expose the students
23 to that course catalog, also starting out with like
24 career inventories to kind of figure out what
25 students are interested in. And then, luckily, since

1 we do have brick-and-mortar locations across the
2 state as well, we do have some partners we're already
3 working with, which also works out as well for the
4 CTE partners in those communities. And so, for
5 instance, if I was to use like this area, for
6 instance, we partner with Little Rock School
7 District/Metro, and so then our students are able to
8 tap into those pathways at Metro and try to have that
9 as part of the onboarding process.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any other questions?

13 MR. SCOTT: One additional. As you -- as you
14 track student success plans, community service
15 learning in your world, help us understand the
16 success and/or challenges that you may be facing
17 there?

18 MR. FELTON: Well, one of the things, we really
19 appreciate the Department. There's been a lot of
20 work into that, and so the templates and resources we
21 have received from the Department have been
22 instrumental in that. Once again, throughout that
23 student onboarding we're able to start admission of
24 those inventory assessments, start driving those
25 conversations. We actually just hired an additional

1 college and career counselor for the virtual program
2 to specifically work on those students. Because
3 since they're not on-site -- we all know -- we
4 learned a lot during Covid that virtual works as
5 well. And so from the success plans, we already do
6 it; it's just virtually. From the community service
7 component, it's, once again, since we do have
8 brick-and-mortar campuses out here. it's taking
9 advantage of some of those partners. And I like what
10 you said earlier about trying to make sure that the
11 career interest that the students have is driven
12 through that community service learning as well. And
13 so continue to try to grow our partners, not just
14 check the box but make it meaningful for our
15 students, and hopefully they're, you know, gaining
16 some knowledge and get a little bit of experience of
17 what potentially they think they'll be interested in
18 after high school.

19 MR. SCOTT: I appreciate that. Ideally, it's
20 great to have that partnership, they have that
21 experience. And who knows, they could come back to
22 that community and be a permanent part and serve a
23 permanent role within that community should they come
24 back.

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I just have one more

1 question. It was the same question I posed earlier
2 about do you have any hard data on why they choose
3 the virtual option versus say coming to your brick-
4 and-mortar campuses?

5 MR. FELTON: I would say -- it sounds like this
6 is a buzzword these days -- but flexibility. You
7 find out a lot of parents and students have unique
8 circumstances, whether it ranges from, you know,
9 transportation, whether it ranges from where they
10 live, you know, who they're living with, medical and
11 health. And so just flexibility. It seems like
12 parents like the flexibility. And some parents
13 actually started during Covid, as we talked about,
14 and it just kind of -- they're more comfortable with
15 that offering and their students have become
16 comfortable with that offering. And so it works
17 really well.

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And -- and as I did
19 earlier, I would probably encourage you to go ahead
20 and maybe do a survey to get some hard data. Because
21 sometimes what we think are the reasons aren't always
22 exactly the reasons. And so that might help you too
23 -- you know, help with your recruitment efforts,
24 things of that nature, you know, moving forward. So
25 if you could just kind of survey those that are

1 currently there, then you might have something to
2 work with.

3 Yeah.

4 MR. SCOTT: It made me think about one scenario
5 with the home visits; right?

6 MR. FELTON: Yeah.

7 MR. SCOTT: Well, even in the virtual world
8 there -- there are virtual home visit options. I
9 think could you just take a look at that? We have
10 some that are reference-able. So you can gain a lot
11 of intel and know what's going on in the world of the
12 families in that way to assist you.

13 MR. FELTON: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Other questions?

15 If not, I'll entertain a motion.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I support the amendment
17 request submitted by Founders Classical Academy.

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. I have a
19 motion. Do I have a second?

20 MR. SCOTT: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. I have a motion
22 by Dr. Wright-McMurray and a second by Mr. Scott.
23 All those in favor?

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

1 Any abstentions?

2 All right. The motion passes. Congratulations.

3 And we'll fill out our voting sheets.

4 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you. Appreciate it.

5 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

6 (A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. We'll start
8 with Dr. Wright-McMurray.

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I voted for. I support --
10 I'm on the wrong one. I think it would still be on
11 -- there it is. Okay.

12 I support Founders Classical Academy's request
13 to amend their charter to serve students in grades
14 7-12 at FCA Online, grades K-8 at FCA Bentonville,
15 and change the name of Founders Classical Academy
16 Online to iSchool Virtual Academy of Arkansas.

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Mr. Scott.

18 MR. SCOTT: I voted for the amendment request of
19 Founders Classical Academy, because of their
20 intentional approach to addressing the needs of the
21 students they serve. Their alignment with rebranding
22 efforts should place them on the right pathway for
23 successful student outcomes.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Mr. Baldwin.

25 MR. BALDWIN: I voted in favor of the grade

1 level amendment request to change the online campus
2 to grades 7-12 and to change the online school name
3 to iSchool Virtual Academy of Arkansas. And then I
4 note that this approval will eliminate the Founders
5 Academy Online LEA 0442702.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. And Dr. Moore.

7 DR. MOORE: I support FCA of Arkansas' request
8 to amend grade levels served at the FCA Online campus
9 from grades K-12 to grades 7-12, and then the grade
10 levels served at the FCA Bentonville campus from
11 grades K-7 to K-8, and change the names of FCA Online
12 to iSchool Virtual Academy of Arkansas.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And then I voted for the
14 amendment as presented by Founders Classical Academy.
15 The change will -- the changes will aid in the
16 charter in serving students with educational
17 solutions that meet their needs.

18 So congratulations.

19 MS. PROVENZA: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you very
21 much.

22 **III.6. CABOT PANTHER ACADEMY**

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Ms. Summons.

24 MS. SUMMONS: Okay. Next, we have Cabot Panther
25 Academy. They're requesting to add a new campus and

1 they're also requesting to change the grade levels
2 served from grades 5-12 to grades K-12. And the
3 charter was asked to return with additional
4 clarification of the request. We have Mr. Michael
5 Byrd here representing Cabot School District.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. If you'll raise
7 your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony
8 you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth,
9 and nothing but the truth?

10 MR. BYRD: I do.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. You may begin.

12 MR. BYRD: Michael Byrd, deputy superintendent,
13 Cabot Schools.

14 Thank you for allowing me to be here this
15 morning, Panel. My colleague, Mr. Aaron Randolph,
16 was not available to be here and asked me to provide
17 some more information for you this morning that's a
18 carryover from last month. So I have a short
19 presentation I'd like to share with you.

20 First, the mission of the Cabot Panther Academy
21 is to imagine -- to reimagine education and building
22 relationships, inspiring every student to reach their
23 full potential, teaching them academics and life
24 skills, guide them to become successful, productive
25 citizens, and helping them to find their own

1 strengths and unique abilities.

2 When we came here last month, we had a proposal
3 to add our Cabot Learning Academy which is
4 currently an ALE setting in our district. So we have
5 three ALE settings in our district. We have the
6 Cabot Panther Academy and we have our traditional ALE
7 program, both of which fall under our current
8 charter. And then we have our Cabot Learning
9 Academy, which is not under the current charter but
10 that's what our request is -- this program that we've
11 had for many years in the Cabot School District be
12 added under the charter. In doing that, in order to
13 fit the needs of the charter we requested -- in order
14 to fit the needs of the population of the students at
15 that school -- at Cabot Learning Academy -- we
16 requested for the grade levels to be changed to K-12
17 instead of 5-12.

18 So our proposed amendment is to add Cabot
19 Learning Academy, which is a K-12 building, to the
20 Cabot Panther charter. It's currently an existing
21 building. It's a building that the district funded
22 and built this past school year. It opened in
23 January of 2024, and our students moved in and began
24 the -- began the second semester of the '23-'24
25 school year in January in this existing building.

1 And then we're also requesting to amend the
2 existing waivers which Cabot Panther Academy has, but
3 only to apply for students in grades 5-12.

4 Last month there was some feedback from CAP
5 members and we want to make sure that we address
6 that. And part of the rationale for the addition of
7 Cabot Learning Academy is that under our present
8 coding system our students who are in CLA are coded
9 in houses. And so they're actually remaining in
10 their current building, whether it's an elementary
11 school or a different junior high or whatever that
12 is. But they're pulled into certain houses in our --
13 in eSchool, so within their buildings versus being
14 pulled to a separate LEA. Let me give you an
15 example: if I have a student who is at an elementary
16 building in Cabot and they go to Cabot Learning
17 Academy, they still show in the numbers or in the
18 eSchool as being an elementary student in a specific
19 elementary school. And we house them -- we make --
20 we have a house label that says CLA. If a different
21 student is in an alternative learning environment or
22 at a Cabot Panther Academy, that change is not in a
23 house; that change is actually made in an LEA change
24 that shows up in the entry or withdrawal from
25 eSchool.

1 So that's what we're requesting is that CLA have
2 its own LEA, be under the charter, and the students
3 can be assigned or housed -- not housed, but assigned
4 to Cabot Learning Academy. It's kind of a
5 behind-the-scenes thing when you start looking at
6 adding grades for students. Just as an example: our
7 teachers at CLA have students from, I think, six or
8 seven different elementary schools in K-4 right now.
9 And when they go to enter grades for those students
10 they have to go to six different teacher access
11 centers in order to -- six different screens in order
12 to enter grades for those students, because they're
13 not housed or they're not in one LEA.

14 The same can apply to when you start looking at
15 testing, and I believe we were in the middle of
16 testing season last time we were here. It presents
17 its own challenges when you're trying to pull
18 students for testing when they're housed or -- or
19 coded to six different elementary schools instead of
20 one LEA. So our students and staff need to be able
21 to -- need to be coded as one LEA for the data and
22 assessment purposes.

23 There were also I believe some questions about
24 accountability. I want to make sure that we address
25 that fully here today. As Cabot Panther Academy is

1 classified as an ALE, it does not receive an
2 A-through-F ranking from the State. However, every
3 student enrolled in that Cabot Panther Academy is
4 coded back to their prospective home school and
5 counts towards that home school's accountability
6 measure. The same thing is true for our current CLA
7 program. Those students, since they are in an ALE
8 environment, currently are not moved to a different
9 LEA but are coded to their school. With this change
10 those students' scores would still go back to the
11 school where they are currently going now. So
12 there's no accountability change even if the Panel
13 sees fit to approve this request.

14 At Cabot Panther Academy and CLA, both are
15 ALEs and would be evaluated as such, as any other ALE
16 would. And Cabot Panther Academy is evaluated for
17 potential renewal under the conversion charter
18 school, just as any other charter school would be.

19 So at this time that's all that I have prepared
20 for you. But I'm certainly willing and will do my
21 best to answer any questions that you may have.

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Wright-McMurray, do you
23 have any questions?

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

25 Thank you for your presentation and you guys working

1 on our questions and providing responses and you're
2 willing to come back.

3 I do have one question I just need a little bit
4 of clarification on. As regards to one of your
5 waivers for school counselor licensure, do you have
6 any information or details how that -- if that has or
7 has -- has it been used in the past?

8 MR. BYRD: It's currently not --

9 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: And how it
10 would be used at the Academy?

11 MR. BYRD: -- being utilized.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

13 MR. BYRD: We currently have -- we have
14 counseling staff that is certified at -- actually at
15 our CLA building, that is onsite all day long and at
16 Cabot Panther Academy and at our traditional ALE
17 building. So that is currently not something that we
18 utilize.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So just a question,
20 do you think that's a waiver you need to continue to
21 have or --

22 MR. BYRD: I will say this, it's one that we
23 have utilized in the past.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

25 MR. BYRD: But in our staffing currently we're

1 able to make that work. And so we feel like it has
2 behooved us to have that counselor in those
3 buildings, because we currently have the staff and
4 we're able to make that work --

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

6 MR. BYRD: -- while it's been something that we
7 have utilized in the past.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

9 MR. BYRD: Yes, ma'am.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

11 MR. SCOTT: Yes. Thank you again for your --
12 for your presentation. If you could just walk me
13 through the various houses and the -- is there any
14 movement of students from one to another? What's the
15 criteria associated with placement of students at
16 CLA versus Cabot Panther Academy --

17 MR. BYRD: Sure.

18 MR. SCOTT: -- versus the traditional district?

19 MR. BYRD: Sure. Absolutely. I'll do my best
20 to answer that. So when we -- when I say houses, we
21 have students that are currently in our CLA program.
22 They are in a building somewhere in the Cabot School
23 District, one of the 17 buildings in the Cabot School
24 District, but we put in a house code that says CLA.
25 So when we go to pull data on those students we can

1 pull students that all have that house code for CLA
2 1st grade or CLA 10th grade or CLA 12th grade and
3 that lets us pull the data. So when I say that
4 they're in-house, that CLA house in eSchool is what
5 allows us to accumulate that data and pull it
6 together.

7 So as far as -- I believe your second question
8 was how we make the determination how students are
9 placed in CLA or --

10 MR. SCOTT: Yes. Those decisions are on the
11 school district's side or are parents --

12 MR. BYRD: Yeah. So that's really a great
13 question. We have about 60 students that are
14 currently at -- in Cabot Panther Academy -- I'm sorry
15 -- at CLA, and 60 percent of those 60 students have
16 IEPs. And so that is an IEP team coming together for
17 approximately 35, 36 kids and deciding if this is the
18 best environment for this student. And that's
19 working with parents, that's working with counselors,
20 classroom teachers for students that have maybe
21 emotional needs or behavioral needs, in order to meet
22 the needs of that student.

23 Additionally, there's another 27 percent of our
24 students at CLA that have a 504 and have gone through
25 a process, through Tier 1 and Tier 2 RTI with

1 behavior interventions and making sure that we
2 provide what the student needs in the typical gen ed
3 setting -- the Tier 1 and then Tier 2 with
4 remediation in trying to help there as much as we
5 can. And eventually working with parents for a CLA
6 placement, where it's a little bit more intensive
7 than a 1-to-15 environment. And then you've got
8 about 13 percent of our student population in CLA
9 that is a gen-ed student that has some behavior or
10 emotional concerns.

11 MR. SCOTT: So is there a pathway of those
12 students in those academies back out of there to --

13 MR. BYRD: You read my mind. That is a
14 fantastic question. Absolutely.

15 So when a student -- we have a level system and
16 our students work on them. So we're looking
17 typically at behavioral and emotional concerns that
18 the student has. And when a student is able to level
19 up or move from one level to another -- there's a
20 certain threshold that's been set and determined by
21 the team, and then they're able to start working back
22 out into what -- the gen ed environment or the next
23 step would be. Maybe that's into a -- a behavior
24 classroom at maybe our high school where they get
25 that little bit more support but have some of the --

1 some of the emotional and social learning block built
2 into the day. And then they go in for one or two
3 classes and then they come to that and then they do
4 half-and-half for a day -- or half of their day at
5 Cabot Learning Academy and then maybe half of their
6 day at the traditional high school and -- until
7 they're able to work into the full day at Cabot High
8 School in the least restrictive environment. So,
9 there is a process.

10 MR. SCOTT: Okay. My last question is -- I'm in
11 this role of engagement and a lot of that is
12 associated with having a diverse set of voices
13 planning activities for the year that promote
14 increased staff capacity to learn how -- and parents
15 capacity to learn how to work together as co -- equal
16 partners. So is there a set of -- of diverse voices,
17 meaning staff and perhaps community and family
18 members, meeting to -- at all of these academies?

19 MR. BYRD: You know, as we went through the
20 construction process of our Cabot Learning Academy
21 over the last year-and-a-half -- when this process
22 started about a year-and-a-half ago, it really
23 brought individuals from the community into the
24 process, in addition -- in addition to parents who
25 were part of that process too. We started thinking

1 about what are the needs of our students with very --
2 a very diverse set of needs. And sometimes the most
3 intensive needs that we have for the district how do
4 we accommodate that from building structure to maybe
5 even have a new structure and looking at what are we
6 providing to our students across the board? So
7 building that facility really helps increase the
8 number of voices that were heard and had a hand in
9 creating what CLA is today.

10 MR. SCOTT: All right. I appreciate that. I
11 just -- FYI, my mascot for my high school was a
12 panther, so I was just going to mention it. So that
13 just got my attention.

14 MR. BYRD: Very good.

15 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

16 MR. BYRD: Yes, sir.

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And normally I'd wait till
18 the end to ask my questions, but it kind of
19 piggybacks on what you're -- you're talking about.
20 So I kind of wanted to ask it now. And it was
21 addressed in a question I had actually sent to our
22 Charter Director. And it's about the nature of your
23 accountability and looking at -- you know, if I pull
24 up on My School Info Cabot Panther Academy, it comes
25 up with of course no letter grades because of the

1 exemption.

2 MR. BYRD: Sure.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: But then below there we do
4 have an ESSA School Index. So if they are indeed
5 being pulled back to -- and I'm trying to understand
6 the logistics of it -- if they're being pulled back
7 to their former schools, how is there an ESSA School
8 Index? And then, how are we educating parents about
9 what that ESSA School Index means so that they
10 understand, one, that now CLA is going to go, in this
11 case, underneath Cabot Panther Academy so they know
12 they have to look there; and then, how do they
13 understand the ESSA School Index, since there's not
14 that -- that easy indicator of a grade to -- to
15 identify it?

16 MR. BYRD: So what I would say is there are a
17 lot of variables that go into that -- into that
18 index. I can't speak to all of those today. But I
19 do understand the question, how and where is that
20 coming from.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

22 MR. BYRD: And I don't know if I have a great
23 answer for you at this time, but I do understand that
24 question. I'm going to make myself a note. Like I
25 said, I don't know if I have a great answer for you.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Well, and I guess the other
2 piece of that is how are we -- how -- how is Cabot
3 educating the parents about -- you know, because it's
4 -- I mean, it's confusing sometimes for some of us,
5 you know. So when we're looking at the fact that
6 they're being shifted, you know, sort of placed in
7 their home schools for their accountability but then
8 they're going to CLA; but then there's a score here
9 for Cabot Panther Academy; but -- then they can't
10 really discern because their students aren't really
11 going to their home schools. I guess it just -- it
12 -- it muddies the waters a little bit for parents --

13 MR. BYRD: Sure.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- on -- on -- on that end.
15 And I'm just wondering how do you disentangle all of
16 that and make sure that they understand, you know,
17 what's going on with -- with the school that their
18 child is enrolled in.

19 MR. BYRD: Yeah. And I think -- I think the way
20 to do that would be through our interview process for
21 -- so for Cabot Panther Academy there's an actual
22 interview process that students go through with their
23 parents where we talk about the school, we talk about
24 what the school is, we talk about the success of the
25 school, what the school isn't --

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

2 MR. BYRD: -- and what it's not intended to be.
3 And really kind of make sure that we're all on the
4 same page before a student is actually accepted into
5 Cabot Panther Academy. The same process plays out in
6 the ALE committee meetings. So it's a group decision
7 at that committee meeting, having discussion about
8 what the ALE is, about what it's not, and making sure
9 that it is the right setting for an individual that
10 may need, you know, alternative learning environment
11 for a certain amount of time.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay. Thank you.

13 Mr. Baldwin.

14 MR. BALDWIN: I think most of my questions have
15 been well asked and well answered. Just one final.

16 In looking at your request, to me it looks like
17 it's -- it's financially neutral because you already
18 own the building. So is there -- are there any costs
19 that you're incurring, new costs in any of this or is
20 it just a bottom-line --

21 MR. BYRD: There really is -- is no -- no new
22 costs in the activity of this. It is all really a
23 behind-the-scenes move that makes things logistically
24 better for the individuals that are working with
25 students on a daily basis, so that they can devote

1 their time to students and not as much time to trying
2 to figure out how do I make this system work the way
3 it's set-up.

4 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

5 MR. BYRD: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Dr. Moore.

7 DR. MOORE: Sure. Thank you for the additional
8 information. That was really helpful.

9 My only question is I don't understand, since
10 the waivers aren't going to apply for the grades
11 below grade 5, why do you need it to be part of the
12 charter? Why can't it just be another LEA? That
13 seems to be, just in my simple mind, the obvious fix.
14 I don't understand the need for the charter.

15 MR. BYRD: I would say that the reason that we
16 would like to have it under the charter -- I don't
17 know. I'm a little stumped by the question.

18 DR. MOORE: Because what you explained makes
19 perfect sense.

20 MR. BYRD: Right.

21 DR. MOORE: Like, I didn't realize all that
22 behind-the-scenes coding.

23 MR. BYRD: Yes.

24 DR. MOORE: That sounds like an absolute
25 nightmare. Or, I mean, that's terrible for your --

1 for the teachers and for everyone. But I just don't
2 see why another LEA for that building -- just like,
3 you know, Magness Creek has an LEA, Southside has an
4 LEA. Why would that just not have an LEA?

5 MR. BYRD: Well, I guess the best answer I can
6 give you is that we have three alternative learning
7 environments in our district, two of them fall under
8 the charter. It would make things consistent across
9 the district if all three of them were under the
10 charter and give us that ability to make sure that
11 it's consistent, regardless of what environment we're
12 talking about with our ALE, that it's all under the
13 same charter.

14 DR. MOORE: But since the -- my -- my thinking
15 is the purpose of the charter is for waivers. That's
16 the purpose of it. So if the waivers aren't going to
17 apply, it just -- I don't understand the --

18 MR. BYRD: Not in -- not in -- not in K-4. Not
19 in K-4. Some of -- some of the waivers may apply in
20 the 5-12, but not in K-4.

21 DR. MOORE: Okay. So this is K-12 then?

22 MR. BYRD: So CLA is a K-12 building. So there
23 are 60 students in that building, in that program
24 currently that are in kindergarten through 12th
25 grade.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. In my head I have it as
2 elementary. That's my bad.

3 MR. BYRD: So, no, it goes kindergarten through
4 12th grade.

5 DR. MOORE: Okay. So then that's another
6 concern about the waivers for the students who are
7 the most in need of services. That's a separate
8 concern then. So I need to look back at the waivers
9 then because of that.

10 MR. BYRD: Absolutely. And, again, like I said,
11 60 percent of our students do have IEPs, and so there
12 is an IEP team that is building exactly what each
13 student needs, to make sure that that plan fits them
14 specifically. An additional 27 percent of our
15 students have 504s, so there's also a team that is
16 coming together to build up a plan that is specific
17 for those students as well in the CLA.

18 MR. SCOTT: I -- I'd like to piggyback on what
19 Dr. Moore was just sharing, and part of it is
20 differentiating charter versus traditional public
21 school. So just wondering why. What's -- what
22 differentiates it and classifies it as a charter,
23 which is a performance-based contract? And -- but
24 the type of students you serve primarily are ALE. So
25 just wondering how it differentiates that school,

1 Cabot Panther, from any other ALE?

2 MR. BYRD: So ask that one more time. How do we
3 differentiate --

4 MR. SCOTT: What differentiates the Cabot
5 Panther Academy as a charter -- or why a charter?

6 MR. BYRD: Sure. Yeah. Absolutely. So I think
7 it really goes back to what we heard in a previous
8 presentation. It's the flexibility. It's the -- the
9 stuff that people have going on in lives and families
10 have going on in lives, it gives them the flexibility
11 to choose what's best for their student. But there
12 are so many stories from individual families that had
13 -- for whatever reason, had a struggle in traditional
14 school settings. And you can -- you can look at that
15 as whatever; it's an income-based thing or emotional
16 needs or medical needs -- or there's a plethora of
17 reasons that people choose that. And CLA is just
18 another option for families that are struggling with
19 kids that may have emotional or behavioral concerns
20 and gives them a more intensive environment where the
21 staff is truly a 1-to-15 -- well, 3-to-15 at times,
22 and in a classroom working with students to get them
23 back to a traditional setting, if that's what's best
24 for them.

25 So to answer your question, what sets it apart

1 from the -- from Cabot School District is that it
2 allows families the flexibility to do what fits their
3 needs best.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I'm piggybacking on his
5 question. So what -- what would differentiate it
6 from a traditional ALE?

7 MR. BYRD: So our traditional ALE -- we do have
8 that setting as well. And so what's different than
9 the traditional ALE is that it's -- it's a hybrid
10 environment, it's where students come part of the
11 day, or it can be completely virtual. We don't have
12 many students who choose the completely virtual
13 option. But we do -- most of our students choose the
14 hybrid day where they come to school for three hours
15 a day, three or four days a week, and they're able
16 then to go work other jobs or take care of other
17 needs that the family may have. And so that's really
18 what sets it apart from traditional ALE. That
19 traditional ALE is an all-day program. Students
20 don't have the flexibility to -- to leave during the
21 middle of the day. But it does -- it's a traditional
22 ALE, providing more counseling, more thoughtfulness
23 about decision-making and making sure that we're
24 providing what our students need in order to take
25 that next step.

1 DR. MOORE: And I'll -- I'll add to that. Y'all
2 may remember that I said my son graduated from Cabot
3 Panther Academy. And he did not need an ALE
4 environment, but he had made some choices that made
5 him where he would not be graduating on time had he
6 not been able to do that, where he could complete
7 multiple credits at his own pace with a lot of
8 encouragement and support from the people there. I
9 didn't even buy the boy graduation invitation
10 announcements because we did not think he was going
11 to graduate. But we were pleasantly pleased that he
12 did.

13 So it's definitely not a traditional ALE
14 environment. And I've known several other families
15 that, you know, across the socioeconomic spectrum,
16 depending on very different needs, whether it be a
17 health need, whether it be an income matter, students
18 having to get out and support their families and have
19 to have an alternative schedule at school. So that
20 part that I'm familiar with is very different. I'm
21 not familiar with that other -- the academy we're
22 talking about, the learning academy. But as far as
23 Cabot Panther Academy it really does meet -- it fits
24 that mold of a charter to meet the needs of the
25 community and parents.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Other questions?

2 If not, I'll entertain a motion.

3 Oh, let's let Stephen do his legal review.

4 Sorry.

5 MR. REYNOLDS: I just wanted to clarify a few
6 things.

7 So at the last meeting the Panel asked for a
8 list of all of the waivers that would apply to the
9 Cabot Learning Academy if it was put under the
10 charter.

11 Mr. Scott, kind of to your question, the
12 reason why -- I can't speak for the district, but why
13 you wouldn't want a charter as opposed to the
14 district is because the waivers would apply only to
15 the charter and not to all the students in the
16 district.

17 And so there was a couple of cleanup things
18 that I wanted to mention.

19 So under the stool -- school district's digital
20 learning plan, the Class Size and Teaching Load
21 waiver, Library Media Services, and the Teacher
22 Salaries, those are all under the district's digital
23 learning plan and not under the district conversion
24 charter. So I can't give legal advice to the
25 district, but if the district wants those waivers to

1 apply to its charter, it should say so on the record.

2 Additionally, there are two waivers that the
3 charter currently holds for the Public School
4 Employee Fair Hearing Act and the Teacher Fair
5 Dismissal Act. Both of those laws were repealed in
6 the last session, and so I would ask that the charter
7 rescind those waivers because they're waiving law
8 that doesn't exist anymore.

9 And I think that that is all of the cleanup
10 that I wanted to do. But I did attach that list of
11 the waivers to the agenda.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Okay.

13 DR. MOORE: So, Stephen, looking at that list,
14 that means for grades 5-12 for these students that
15 have these intense needs, there wouldn't be teacher
16 licensure requirements? They don't have to have a
17 qualified teacher in every classroom?

18 MR. REYNOLDS: That's correct. That's what the
19 Cabot Panther Academy currently has waivers -- I
20 mean, they currently have all these waivers. So any
21 new students that are added to that charter would --
22 those waivers would apply to all of the students.

23 DR. MOORE: Okay.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I guess, I -- I'm sorry.

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes, Dr. Wright-McMurray.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sorry. I don't have my
2 readers on. I can't see what's going on --

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- around me. So I didn't
5 know if I'm --

6 So, I guess, when I was reviewing the waivers
7 earlier I didn't see the digital learning plan. Is
8 it not -- is it on here?

9 MR. REYNOLDS: So I just put the waivers on a
10 list and I highlighted the ones that I found --

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

12 MR. REYNOLDS: -- that were not part of the
13 district conversion charter. That's not how this
14 school got those waivers. They got them through
15 their digital learning plan --

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

17 MR. REYNOLDS: -- presumably during Covid. I
18 wasn't here then, so I don't know if that was, you
19 know --

20 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And DLPs no longer exist.

21 MR. REYNOLDS: Correct. The Department is no
22 longer doing DLPs.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Well, that's why I was a
24 little bit hazy.

25 MR. REYNOLDS: So --

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

2 MR. REYNOLDS: -- if they don't apply -- so if
3 they don't amend the charter to add these waivers,
4 those waivers will expire in July of 2027, which is a
5 long way out but I thought that I would bring it up
6 now so that we didn't have to bring it up later.

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

8 MR. REYNOLDS: So if you guys want to amend your
9 charter to add the waivers that are under your DLP,
10 just add -- just come up here and say so on the
11 record, just so we have a clear record.

12 MR. BYRD: So I also make a request to add
13 the waivers under the DLP to the current charter?

14 MR. REYNOLDS: And then -- if you want to. I'm
15 not telling you what to do. But if you want to go
16 ahead and rescind the two waivers for the -- the two
17 laws that were repealed in the legislative session.
18 You guys have those waivers now.

19 MR. BYRD: And then we do make that request to
20 repeal those two waivers.

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right.

22 MR. REYNOLDS: All right. That's all I have.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. Thank you.

24 Dr. Wright-McMurray.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I think just for my

1 clarification, now what's happening with the DLP?
2 I'm just -- I'm trying to follow the conversation.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So they've requested the
4 waivers that were under the DLP --

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That is no longer valid?

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Well, it's valid till 2027.
7 But we're not granting them anymore.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's what my question --

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes. Yeah.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- was it null or valid.
11 My question is that it will expire in 2027, and so by
12 us having this action is not going to provide any
13 additional time period for the DLP --

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Not for the DLP.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- because it's no longer
16 available?

17 MR. REYNOLDS: That's correct. It's just adding
18 them --

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

20 MR. REYNOLDS: -- to the charter.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. All right. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Mr. Scott.

24 MR. SCOTT: Yes. I just want to confirm -- I
25 don't know if this is a piggyback from Dr. Moore. In

1 an environment where there's tremendous need at the
2 student level there's a waiver for teacher licensure.
3 So, in theory, they would have an environment where
4 the staff member providing the teaching does not have
5 that license to support their need; is that right?
6 Am I reading that right? Because of that waiver?

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

8 MR. SCOTT: Okay.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Other questions?

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Well, I guess can we give
11 the district an opportunity to speak to how that
12 waiver is currently being used --

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

14 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- at the academy?

15 MR. BYRD: So at Cabot Panther Academy?

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yes, sir.

17 MR. BYRD: Yes. So it is currently being
18 utilized at Cabot Panther Academy for students that
19 may need to take a certain class or whatever. We
20 have students that are assigned to teachers that may
21 not have the licensure for that or may have a
22 licensure in another area.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So they have a license --

24 MR. BYRD: Yes.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- just not maybe licensed

1 in that specific subject area?

2 MR. BYRD: Either have a license or on an ALP
3 and working towards a license. Yes.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

5 DR. MOORE: The highly-qualified teacher is also
6 a waiver?

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Well, AQT -- they have to
8 be AQT in order to be working under that -- that
9 waiver.

10 DR. MOORE: Okay. But right now in your CLA
11 everyone is certified?

12 MR. BYRD: Correct.

13 DR. MOORE: But this would open it up --

14 MR. BYRD: And we would have to change the way
15 the CLA program is operated.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Try once again. Maybe I
17 should've had two cups of coffee this morning instead
18 of just the one. But so what we're saying is that
19 currently at the Cabot Panther Academy all of the
20 teachers that are there -- they are licensed or
21 certified?

22 MR. BYRD: Yes.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: But just maybe not in your
24 specific area, but they may be --

25 MR. BYRD: Potentially, yes.

1 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay. So we currently do
2 not have unlicensed or uncertified teachers that are
3 working there?

4 MR. BYRD: No.

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

6 MR. SCOTT: So there's a focus on accountability
7 and performance. So if that is indeed the case,
8 independent of the licensure and the situation
9 involving the waivers, I'm okay. Well, maybe there
10 is -- I don't want to speak for you, but there is an
11 increased effort to work with student performance.

12 MR. BYRD: Say that one more time. There's an
13 increased effort --

14 MR. SCOTT: Performance is still a focal area?

15 MR. BYRD: One-hundred percent.

16 MR. SCOTT: Yes.

17 MR. BYRD: Yes. Absolutely. I think that the
18 Cabot School District, it cares deeply about the
19 academic learning of our students. But not only
20 that, their performance after -- afterwards, giving
21 back to the community, being able to come back to our
22 community and provide support for other individuals.
23 We are all in in helping students succeed, and not
24 just in academics but in life. And we are going to
25 do everything that we can in order to make that

1 happen. And that's our track record and I can assure
2 you that's what we're going to do moving forward as
3 well.

4 MR. SCOTT: Thank you.

5 MR. BYRD: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any other questions?

7 If not, I will entertain a motion.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Is there still questions
9 or -- and I don't know if I'm the one to ask that
10 question, but I feel like we're all looking at each
11 other.

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

13 DR. MOORE: I -- I -- I still struggle to be
14 okay with having these waivers available for that
15 group of students that are in the most need. I -- I
16 have firm faith in the Cabot School District and live
17 purposefully in Cabot, because I believe in the Cabot
18 School District and in the leadership, and I don't
19 think they would ever be nefarious in plans and not
20 serve students. I a hundred percent support that
21 school district. But I don't want to set a precedent
22 where I would in another school district have set
23 this up, that I might not have that, you know,
24 personal trust and knowledge of their systems. I
25 can't -- I can't in good faith support a school that

1 is structured for students that are in that most need
2 to have these waivers in place. I'm sorry.

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And I might add that you
4 are a new member to the board, so, I mean, this would
5 be setting a precedent for you and your decision. So
6 that's -- I just want to acknowledge that. Yeah.

7 DR. MOORE: And I can't recuse myself --

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

9 DR. MOORE: -- since we have such a small group.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So --

11 MR. SCOTT: Well, the only thing it's relative
12 to the matter that she just shared, that precedent
13 that would be set --

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

15 MR. SCOTT: -- ideally, we identified the needs
16 and you mapped that to the appropriate resources and
17 you moved forward. There's a little inspiration here
18 you have. And obviously Cabot School District is --
19 is -- is -- is one that is focused on that. But to
20 set a precedent for future groups that will come in
21 and say, "Oh, I'm going to leverage those waivers,"
22 and the question becomes the plight of those students
23 that are being served. That's one thing that's
24 juggling with --

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I guess -- I guess -- so I

1 guess just the question that I have and just -- I
2 fully understand if we have the one thing, I do.
3 Because, you know, when we have the most high-need
4 students we need to try to insure that they have the
5 most supports. But I guess I just am thinking about
6 other charters that have a similar focus of
7 supporting students that are in alternative learning
8 environments that have come before us and have had
9 similar waivers. So I guess I just want to we not
10 set this precedent so then if we have other ones that
11 come before us, kind of like we let them go. I mean,
12 so going forward we would then not have that same
13 ability to support those schools going forward.
14 Because part of the intention of them having that is
15 to be able to in some aspects bring in folks that
16 they can get to the level of being licensed and
17 certified, but coming with a skillset that may be
18 of benefit to the classroom as well.

19 So I'm kind of, yeah, in between both of them, I
20 guess. And so I'm trying to kind of get through
21 that. How do we not go so far to the other side of
22 it too then where we are setting a precedent to where
23 that really won't be an available waiver for folks
24 going forward.

25 DR. MOORE: I hear your point there. But I just

1 have -- I haven't heard any plans for things to
2 actually be different. Like, we do waivers so you
3 can do things different to meet needs.

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

5 DR. MOORE: And schools that come that want a
6 waiver it's because they have this other plan of how
7 they --

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sure.

9 DR. MOORE: -- want to do something.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Yeah.

11 DR. MOORE: And I've just -- I haven't heard
12 that plan of --

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

14 DR. MOORE: -- attack with that.

15 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

16 MR. BALDWIN: Well, let me --

17 DR. MOORE: Well, just the need, I should say.
18 I've not heard a need for the waivers.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sure.

20 MR. BALDWIN: Let me ask the question, because
21 I'm -- I'm sitting here reading the description of
22 what you're requesting. And I guess I've -- I've
23 lost total -- I don't understand what we're even
24 talking about. Because I don't -- I don't get all
25 the LEAs. I'm not an educator. This -- I mean

1 that's all foreign to me. But it looks to me like
2 you're requesting to add a new campus to be located
3 at 407 South Polk, and to change the grade levels
4 served from 5-12 to K-12. So that's the request.
5 And I -- and I guess -- and I hear the concern about
6 -- I guess you're also requesting certain waivers for
7 this. Are these existing waivers or are these new --

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes. These would all be
9 their existing waivers for Cabot Panther Academy.
10 This school, CLA, would come underneath Cabot Panther
11 Academy.

12 MR. BALDWIN: Okay. So that's the change.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

14 MR. BALDWIN: And that's what you guys are
15 concerned about.

16 Would you all be willing to change that so the
17 waivers don't cause the concern that they're causing
18 to get these other two items approved? Or are you
19 intending to change that?

20 MR. BYRD: Oh, certainly. That's -- that's part
21 of the reason we're back here today. That was part
22 of the request last time there was concern with
23 K-4 and those kids. And so that's why the request is
24 to not have those waivers apply, except for 5-12 as
25 they currently do under the charter, even at the CLA

1 building.

2 And I'll say this, in our CLA environment, as an
3 ALE it's very outside-the-box and very diverse in
4 what we offer students there and is very I would say
5 cutting-edge on what public schools are doing for
6 kids across -- across our state. And services that
7 we're able to offer there have -- have really been
8 thought-out and designed to keep kids in school and
9 to keep families engaged with our community. That's
10 the purpose of CLA.

11 The purpose of the request is some logistic
12 things that back in to make it easier for the
13 educators that are trying to work with kids every
14 day and to cleanup some of the logistic things that
15 we're having to deal with data when it comes to
16 grading and the testing piece and trying to get kids
17 from one building. And they're -- but they're in --
18 actually not in that building, they're in another
19 building, but inhouse.

20 And so that's the purpose of the request is to
21 cleanup those things, to make it easier for the
22 adults that are trying to serve these kids.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And so, I guess, my
24 question would be if you're doing all -- all of these
25 innovative things now with CLA, but without the

1 waivers, how will the waivers impact that once you
2 have those in place?

3 MR. BYRD: Yeah. So there's really not been a
4 lot of thought put into how these waivers will affect
5 CLA because there's not a plan to use the waivers at
6 CLA. CLA is going to continue to function for the
7 foreseeable future as it currently is as a program.
8 It is what's best for kids. It does create some --
9 some thought, based on what I heard earlier, is that
10 maybe there is an innovative approach or maybe there
11 is an individual with a heart for kids that may not
12 have the specific licensure moving forward -- but
13 it's what's best for kids. And if that's an option
14 for us moving forward and it's what's best for kids
15 and families and that becomes something that we can
16 utilize to make it better for our community and for
17 our students in order to accomplish a graduation or
18 to go on to college or to a trade school or whatever
19 their next step is, then we would certainly be
20 willing to utilize it to make a --

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And -- and what I think I'm
22 hearing from Panel Members -- and if I'm wrong,
23 correct me. But what I think I'm hearing is if
24 everything is working as it should currently, and
25 this is just a logistical change, why even include

1 the 5-12 waivers for that particular campus? When it
2 could continue to function as-is and, you know, they
3 could still be under Cabot Panther Academy for
4 logistical purposes but not have the waivers apply
5 K-12 at CLA. Am I -- is that what I'm hearing?

6 DR. MOORE: That, or have just an LEA.

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah. Yeah, either one of
8 those would -- yeah -- would work. Because if it's a
9 logistical change, I'm with you, I see the LEA number
10 as being the best way to go.

11 Other comments or questions?

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Like I say, I'm -- I guess
13 my question -- so currently the way the campus is
14 structured they have not had access to the waivers in
15 the past?

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Correct.

17 MR. BYRD: It operates as an ALE.

18 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

19 MR. BYRD: It's an alternative learning
20 environment.

21 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So this would be new for
22 that campus, but just not new for the charter?

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes, for Cabot Panther.

24 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I mean, I guess I'm -- I'm
25 kind of still where I am, is that, you know, I -- I

1 understand everyone's point. I just -- I want to be
2 careful not to today do something that we've allowed
3 to happen with other charters in the past. And then
4 going forward, then I would feel responsible and
5 obligated to say whoever comes in front of me going
6 forward, I would have to treat the same. And so I'm
7 just trying to be cautious about -- cautious about
8 that.

9 Now if -- if the district is saying, okay, we
10 are willing to say we're not going to -- we have not
11 utilized the waiver without having access to it and
12 that we don't have access to it, we don't plan to,
13 then start to bring in -- like, the majority of the
14 teaching staff is going to be folks who are not
15 licensed and, you know, are not credentialed or
16 certified, then that would be a greater concern. But
17 if the intent is going to be that moving forward
18 we're going to continue to operate as we have where
19 we have folks in front of students that do have their
20 credentials, then if there's, like, this -- this not
21 -- it's not the norm, but it's an exception --
22 exception case where we would need to have that
23 combination, then I would be okay with that. But if
24 it's --

25 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So I'm going to quote the

1 voice of Deb Coffman here.

2 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: What did you say?

3 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: I'm going to quote the
4 voice of Deb Coffman here --

5 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: -- which is waivers
7 shouldn't be given just in case.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Well, I know that.

9 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

10 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Because, you know, I was
11 on with Deb and --

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

13 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- that voice rings true,
14 as well.

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I just -- I'm just trying
17 to be cautious on not doing something that we've
18 allowed to happen before --

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- and then I would feel
21 obligated not to allow it to happen again.

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

23 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So that was my -- that's
24 my only thing. But if -- if the district is saying,
25 okay, we'll -- you know, we don't really need it, it

1 was just a part of, then -- but I just -- I don't
2 feel like we can force them.

3 DR. MOORE: No. And I guess -- and that, what
4 you're just saying right there, is my concern. If
5 it's not needed, then why are we doing it? Because
6 when people come to us normally it's because they
7 need it and have a purpose for it.

8 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Uh-huh.

9 DR. MOORE: So if there's not a need or a
10 purpose, and it's a population that you certainly
11 need to make sure they're being served --

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Sure.

13 DR. MOORE: Like I say, Teacher of the Year was
14 a SPED teacher in Cabot, so there's that. I just
15 don't see the need or purpose. So --

16 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So we can address this
17 back to the district. What do you -- what would be
18 their thoughts on that, on -- what are your thoughts
19 on -- because that seems to be a sticking point. So
20 is -- you know, what are your thoughts on not having
21 that as being one of the included waivers? If, as
22 you're currently operating, you haven't needed it,
23 nor had you had access to it. So you've been able to
24 appropriately function without having the waiver for
25 teacher licensure.

1 MR. SCOTT: And to that question, same
2 question.

3 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I don't' know -- I don't
4 know if I'm going to let you do that or not.

5 MR. SCOTT: A description of what's the
6 environment with approval; what are you facing
7 without approval?

8 MR. BYRD: Without approval, we're going to
9 continue to operate and take care of kids. And it
10 just -- you know, the logistical pieces will be --
11 will continue to be a challenge for us. And it's
12 been a challenge, but it's not something we haven't
13 been able to overcome. The grading thing, the
14 collecting the data, the pulling students for tests
15 and making sure that all the testing and all those
16 pieces come together appropriately, we'll make that
17 happen. So if the request is denied, then we can
18 certainly continue on and we'll take care of kids.
19 We've done it and we will continue to do so.

20 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So I don't -- so I'll keep
21 the mic up. I don't think my intention is to deny
22 your request. Because what you have explained to us
23 on the reason why you're even before us seeking to
24 make these changes makes perfect sense, because it
25 sounds like just a logistical nightmare for your

1 teachers. And it sounds like it's in excess of use
2 of additional time to be spent on more productive
3 tasks.

4 I think our -- well, I think for what we're
5 saying the sticking point is, the waiver for the
6 licensure. Because even when you answered my
7 question about school counselor I felt a little bit
8 more comfortable in that, because my concern was, you
9 know, we have students that are in an ALE environment
10 and if they don't have access to a certified
11 counselor that's very, you know, disconcerting. But
12 you explained that that has not been the case. So
13 it's not -- also not the case with teachers as well,
14 is that if you would have it on the books, but you
15 wouldn't really be utilizing it. And so I think
16 that's a sticking point for the Panel that is there.
17 Would the district be willing to consider not having
18 access to that waiver if it has not been utilized in
19 the past?

20 MR. REYNOLDS: I just want to clarify something
21 real big -- real quick about the waiver.

22 So the waiver for teacher licensure already
23 exists for Cabot Panther Academy.

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Right.

25 MR. REYNOLDS: And if the -- I mean if the

1 request is to add students from the Cabot Learning
2 Academy to that charter, then the Teacher Licensure
3 waiver would cover those new students. But if you
4 remove the Teacher Licensure waiver from the charter,
5 then the Cabot Panther Academy loses the waiver as
6 well as the learning academy. So I just wanted to
7 clarify that.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Well, then how does that
9 work for the K-4?

10 MR. REYNOLDS: Well, for the K-4 they're
11 amending their request to not include the K-4. So
12 that would include the charter.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So how can they amend the
14 request to not include the K-4 and not the CLA?

15 MR. REYNOLDS: Well, they can't. I mean if
16 they're amending the request to not include K-4, then
17 it would -- that would amend the charter so that the
18 entire charter wouldn't have the waiver.

19 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So you're saying based on
20 the LEA number then?

21 MR. REYNOLDS: It's -- yeah, the waivers are
22 attached to the LEA.

23 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Right. Uh-huh.

24 MR. REYNOLDS: And so anything under that LEA
25 number has that waiver currently.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Right.

2 MR. REYNOLDS: So if you add more students to
3 that --

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So then technically it's
5 going to apply to K-4?

6 MR. REYNOLDS: For now. Right now, it does.
7 But --

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: No. What I'm saying is
9 once the K-4 is added it's going to apply because
10 it's under that LEA number. So there's no way for it
11 not -- for the system to catch it. So, I mean, the
12 argument is -- I'm saying either way.

13 MR. REYNOLDS: Uh-huh. Yeah. And so I just
14 wanted to clarify that --

15 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

16 MR. REYNOLDS: -- about the -- how the waivers
17 operate.

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Can I --

20 MR. BALDWIN: Let me --

21 [INAUDIBLE MULTIPLE CONVERSATIONS AT THE SAME TIME]

22 MR. BALDWIN: So I've been -- I've been quiet
23 because I really am confused about what we're all
24 talking about. I think we're two ships passing in
25 the night. I think he -- I think you guys have a

1 well-intentioned plan; it will be something that will
2 be helpful to you all. But the details of it are not
3 -- you know, they're not presented to us. I was just
4 looking back at -- at all the information and
5 everything we've talked about in here is not in here;
6 it's just this -- just general information stuff. I
7 think it would be helpful -- if you all really want
8 to do this, you've got to come back and be responsive
9 to the questions that we're asking. And -- and I'm
10 not -- you know, I don't know the details of all
11 these questions. But the fact I don't know and it
12 continues to concern me to vote in favor of this --
13 and I think what we're talking about is just denying
14 this, just me speaking, and let you guys come back.

15 And if you really want to do this, come back,
16 and make your case and convince us that -- that this
17 is the right thing to do.

18 MR. BYRD: So at a chance of not being invited
19 back again, you know, I believe it would be best for
20 us to withdraw --

21 MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

22 MR. BYRD: -- the request at this time and to
23 have some conversation about the LEA, to have some
24 conversation about some of the points that you
25 brought up today, just to make sure that we answer

1 fully, if we decide that this is the direction we
2 still want to go moving forward.

3 DR. MOORE: And I don't know what the LEA
4 entails because that's not something I've ever done.
5 Do any of y'all --

6 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So it's just an LEA request
7 to add a new campus. So it normally -- well, it's
8 passed for this year. For next year it'll be June
9 1st, is the deadline for the LEA requests. And it's
10 just a request to add a new campus. Yeah.

11 DR. MOORE: Yeah. Because I agree with what he
12 said and what Dr. Wright-McMurray --

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

14 DR. MOORE: I mean, that sounds curable, the
15 logistics of what you're having to do.

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah. And I think, you
17 know, it's -- it's something where it's a simple fix
18 to do it logistically that way, as opposed to going
19 -- and if we can get the answers to the questions
20 that we have, you know, maybe that will change.

21 MR. BYRD: Absolutely.

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And -- and I think it also
23 -- you know, since I did directly ask the question
24 through our charter director about the parents being
25 educated on that -- that accountability piece, I -- I

1 don't feel comfortable voting for it, as a parent,
2 knowing that this is, one, a vulnerable population,
3 and two, these parents are really going to be trying
4 to look to see how is their school performing and
5 they're not able to look through that data and figure
6 it out.

7 MR. BYRD: Absolutely.

8 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

9 MR. BYRD: Okay. Well, thank you all for your
10 time.

11 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Thank you.

12 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: I did have another
13 question, but I guess I can ask you.

14 So the other options that are available, you
15 said there's -- still they're going to have an
16 opportunity to address these concerns this summer so
17 that they could have that in place --

18 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yes.

19 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: -- for the next academic
20 year?

21 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: So -- well, so the
22 amendment request could be addressed and come in
23 August and then be able to -- if they have enough
24 time to come up with a plan.

25 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: Okay.

1 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

2 DR. MOORE: So on the new LEA, you said the
3 deadline is June 1st?

4 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: That's why I'm a little
5 confused.

6 DR. MOORE: Is there no work around for that?

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: That would be a question
8 for Carmen, so --

9 DR. MOORE: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

11 DR. MOORE: Because they came to us --

12 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Uh-huh.

13 DR. MOORE: -- months ago.

14 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Right.

15 DR. MOORE: And we delayed things and didn't
16 really give an answer to them --

17 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah.

18 DR. MOORE: -- until today. So, in essence,
19 they've been delayed a whole year for that option.
20 So if there were any way to make an exception that
21 they --

22 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: We can --

23 DR. MOORE: -- might be able to file that --

24 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Yeah. We can reach out to
25 Carmen and see what she says. I don't -- I don't

1 know what the answer will be, but that's something we
2 can definitely do.

3 DR. MOORE: Okay.

4 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: And I can work with you
5 directly to do that. Yeah. So, all right.

6 **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

7 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any new business?

8 (NO RESPONSE)

9 All right.

10 Well, I'll accept a motion to adjourn.

11 DR. WRIGHT-McMURRAY: So moved.

12 DR. MOORE: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: All right. All those in
14 favor?

15 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

16 CHAIRMAN SUTHERLIN: Any opposed?

17 All right. The motion passes.

18 (The agenda was concluded at 11:10 a.m.)

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)

) ss

COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me or under my direct supervision to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

I FURTHER CERTIFY, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or employed by the parties hereto, nor financially interested or otherwise, in the outcome of this action, and that I have no contract with the parties, attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original deposition transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial attorney, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties in the action.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 11th day of July, 2024.



MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR

Certified Court Reporter #852

