



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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October 18, 2017

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

Re: Harlem Link Charter School Renewal

Dear Ms. Carello:

The members of Community Education Council for District 3 of New York City (“CEC3”), who represent Manhattan’s Upper West Side and southern Harlem (110th-122nd Streets, Fifth Avenue to Morningside Park), respectfully request that you deny Harlem Link Charter School’s (“Harlem Link”) proposed renewal, which seeks to increase its student population to 500 students. As indicated in our letter addressed to your attention and dated August 18, 2017, southern Harlem (“D3 Harlem”) contains seven (7) charter elementary schools, including Harlem Link and six (6) public elementary schools all contained in the equivalent of 2-3 school zones. D3 Harlem is oversaturated and this level of parental “choice” applies undue pressure to parents. At this time, D3 Harlem will be unduly harmed by approving a renewal that would increase Harlem Link’s student population.

Harlem Link is currently co-located within the same building as The Early Childhood Discovery and Design Magnet School (“P.S. 185”) which serves approximately 250 children in pre-kindergarten through second grade and The Alain L. Locke Magnet School for Environmental Stewardship (“P.S. 208”), which serves approximately 150 students in third through fifth grades. Both P.S. 185 and P.S. 208 are administered by the New York City Department of Education (the “DOE”). Currently, Harlem Link enrolls approximately 425 students. The Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization Report (the “Blue Book”) authored by the DOE indicates that Harlem Link’s target cap is 376. As such, Harlem Link is already expanding beyond the footprint allowed by the DOE. Operating in this manner is taking valuable space from the student populations of both P.S. 185 and P.S. 208. Approving Harlem Link’s renewal request for an expansion to 500 students would permit Harlem Link at any point in the future to push into space needed by the student populations of either or both P.S. 185 and P.S. 208.

Co-location presents many challenges for the schools involved. These challenges are exacerbated when the co-located schools are public and charter schools that come under different governance. Unfortunately, CEC3 has been made aware of several instances in which Harlem Link

has disregarded its relationship with P.S. 185 and P.S. 208. Harlem Link has abused its use of the building's outdoor space and gym and has permitted excessive numbers of parents into the cafeteria during meal times. Once again, these issues will become increasingly more problematic if Harlem Link is permitted to enroll additional children.

Furthermore, the DOE aims to improve the public schools in D3 Harlem in the coming years through various initiatives. While no official proposals have been made public, the Office of District Planning and School Design plan to strengthen and expand the existing public school through a larger cohort of three sections across grades. As such, every effort must be made to provide a possible merged school with the resources and facilities necessary to ensure its success. Taking such resources from P.S. 185 and P.S. 208 for potential reallocation to Harlem Link will undermine that effort. In addition, the 3-K initiative aligns perfectly with the mission of P.S. 185 and would be a welcome addition to this school's early development programming.

Lastly, based upon statistical information prepared by CEC3, many of Harlem Link's student population may be coming from school districts other than District 3. Space at this campus must be maintained for students of District 3 attending P.S. 185 and P.S. 208 or for another District 3 use. It is not acceptable that Harlem Link be permitted to take space in the building to serve students from outside of District 3.

Parents and advocates for public education believe that every effort must be made to ensure that the extension and expansion of any charter school be carefully reviewed to prevent interference of long-standing public schools or to cause undue confusion and disruption to families. As such, CEC3 repeats our request to deny Harlem Link's renewal plan for so long as such plan would permit the school to increase its enrollment to 500 students. Any such expansion would jeopardize the ability of P.S. 185 and P.S. 208 to grow, to expand and to better serve more members of the D3 Harlem community.

Sincerely,

Community Education Council District 3

cc: District 3 Superintendent Ilene Altschul
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat
U.S. Congressman Jerry Nadler
Joseph W. Belluck, Chair, SUNY Board of Trustees
Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, New York State Education Department
Regent Chancellor Betty A. Rosa
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City Council Member Mark Levine

City Council Member Bill Perkins
City Council Member Helen Rosenthal
Dr. Hazel Dukes, NAACP New York President
Peter Rose, NAACP National Task Force
Melissa Harris, New York City DOE Charter School Office
Manhattan Community Board 7 Chair Roberta Semer
Manhattan Community Board 10 Chair Cicely Harris
Steven Evangelista, Principal, Harlem Link Charter School
Jane Murphy, Principal, P.S. 185
Susan Green, Principal P.S. 208