

# public citizens for children + youth

## **Testimony Presented to the Philadelphia Board of Education** RE: Transparency of Multiple Charter School Organizations Protects Students

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The School District of Philadelphia's Charter Schools Office is the most experienced charter school authorizer in the state. Due to its focus on rules, procedures, accessibility of school level data – all measures that support the growth of high quality charter options for its students - districts within and outside of Pennsylvania look to the office as a model for charter authorization. As you begin to receive and review applications for Multiple Charter School Organizations (MCSO's), we urge you to adopt a process that ensures that the quality for which the district is known does not waiver. We ask that you require proposed MCSOs to submit disaggregated student data at the school building level during the application phase and throughout the MCSO's existence as an entity.

When parents are searching for options for schools for their children, they want to know how the kids in the school are doing, who attends the school, what languages are spoken there, how many kids are there, how many of them are poor, how the school treats its students, and whether their kids will reach their expected milestones at the school they ultimately choose. Only records that contain accolades as well as areas of concern within the building can provide parents with an accurate picture of whether a school is a good fit for their child prior to making their decision. Therefore, it is imperative that parents have access to this information prior to making one of the most important decisions in their children's lives – where he or she will get an education.

By law, an MCSO can consist of schools that do well academically and fiscally *and* schools that do not. After an MCSO is established, other schools can be housed under its umbrella and children who go to other schools in the network can transfer to other schools within them.

Data on how well or poorly individual schools perform or how they discipline students can significantly differ. Moreover, data can be skewed depending on numerous factors including select admit requirements, minority, special education, and enrollment of English language learners that differs from the surrounding schools in the area. Without the disaggregation of data, such distinctions may not be obvious.



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Consequently, providing parents and the public with disaggregated data from a school or group of schools allows for a more comprehensive and accurate window into how school is educating its students. It is the disaggregated information that speaks to whether a school is a good fit for a child – such as how well children from various backgrounds do, how diverse the student body is and whether children from different backgrounds are suspended or disciplined at different rates. We urge the school district to illustrate by policy what is needed for parents have access to the data about a school that matters.

We therefore implore you to adopt an application review process that:

- 1) requires individual schools to submit disaggregated data about how the students in each school in the proposed MCSO are performing, discipline procedures, and enrollment;
- 2) considers the performance of student subgroups in each school building requesting approval as a part of the MCSO as a determining factor for approval; and
- 3) necessitates each approved MSCO to continue to provide disaggregated school building level data regarding student performance for existing and new charters under the MCSO's purview.

The implementation of these measures goes a long way toward protecting children and parents from uninformed decision making and provides another opportunity for the district to demonstrate the high quality authorization practices for which it is known.