

May 22, 2015

Natasha Warsaw
4812 Fort Totten Drive NE
Washington, DC 20011

Dear Ms. Warsaw:

Thank you for submitting an application to establish a public charter school in the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (PCSB) has completed the Fall 2015 Application Review process. I regret to inform you that at its public meeting held on May 18, 2015, PCSB did not approve your application to establish Sustainable Futures as a public charter school in the District of Columbia. Please know that many of the existing public charter schools in D.C. applied a second time, with revisions to the application made in response to the reasons for the initial denial. We encourage you to consider reapplying in the future.

The Board's decision was based on a thorough evaluation of the written application and information gathered from the capacity interview, and the public hearing. While there were many strong aspects of the application, the following findings were the basis for denial:

- Teacher recruitment and training: The applicant presented the idea that its teachers would be what it termed "Renaissance teachers;" in the capacity interview, the founding group explained that these teachers would be innovative within their classrooms, creative in problem-solving, and have five to seven years of experience. However, the applicant did not have a concrete, well-developed plan to recruit these teachers or to offer meaningful professional development and support to these teachers to help them achieve this ideal. This is especially concerning, considering that the applicant plans to double the size of its school in the second year of operation.
- Instructional methods: The applicant's proposed instructional methods are under-developed and require extensive revision to provide details in how the strategies will be implemented. Some examples include:
 - Individual Learning Plans (ILPs): While the applicant presented a potential software solution to support ILP development, many of the details were not fully explained, including the scope of ILPs; how ILPs integrate information from portfolios of student work; and how ILPs will tie in with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities.
 - Portfolio assessment procedures: The applicant was unable to articulate how teachers would be supported to ensure consistent standards for portfolio assessments, which form the basis of decisions regarding student outcomes. This will be of particular concern if the applicant is unable to recruit sufficient teachers who are experienced with portfolio assessment.

- Talent Cloud: The applicant proposed to have a network of professionals available to students for project-based learning, but did not adequately explain how the Talent Cloud will work, how experts will be recruited, who will manage it, and how the school will ensure program quality.
- Discipline procedures: *Section B. Education Plan, 4. Support for Learning, c. Safety, Order, and Student Discipline* was omitted from the written application.
- Student recruitment and engagement: The applicant did not provide detailed strategies for recruiting and for engaging students to remain in school. For retention it planned to rely on student self-motivation, but did not offer a comprehensive approach to help students maintain their confidence and focus on outcomes. This is exceptionally important given that their target population is students who were unsuccessful in previous schools, and may need to take many courses to graduate based on Sustainable Futures' assessment of their college/career readiness.
- Capacity of the founding group: The capacity of the members of the founding group is not fully apparent and it is unclear which members of the founding group would stay on as staff or board members of the school. The leader of the applicant group and proposed Head of School appeared in both the capacity interview and the public hearing as being personally responsible for virtually every element of the application and school. The other members of the founding group did not appear to be full partners in the project. Overall, the founding group did not demonstrate the capacity and a strategy to obtain the skills and expertise needed to meet the objectives of the application.

Should you choose to file a petition again, that petition must meet the requirements of the School Reform Act. D.C. Code § 38-1802.02. Specifically, it should appropriately resolve the deficiencies cited above and demonstrate: (a) a demonstrated need for the school; (b) sufficient progress in developing the plan; (c) alignment of the entire school program with the school's mission and philosophy; (d) inclusion of and adequate support for special populations; and (e) the founding group's capability to ensure that the school can meet the educational objectives outlined in the application. If you would like, PCSB staff would be happy to talk with you about your application's strengths and weaknesses.

Should you want to appeal the denial of your application, you may seek review of this decision pursuant to D.C. Code §38-1802.03(j).

We recognize the hard work and effort that went into the development of your application. There were many positive parts of the application that are not mentioned in this letter. Thank you for your interest in public charter schools and your commitment to improving public education in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,

Scott Pearson
Executive Director
DC Public Charter School Board