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VICE-CHAIR:
JOINT ENERGY
MEMBER:
CITY, COUNTY & LOCAL
REVENUE & TAXATION
JOINT BUDGET
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SENATE
STATE OF ARKANSAS

August 2, 2021

Dear Charter Authorizing Panel:

Please accept this letter in support of IDEA Public Schools as it applies to establish a tuition-free public charter school in Arkansas. It is my understanding that IDEA Public Schools would open its first schools in Little Rock and North Little Rock.

As one of the nation's top charter management organizations, IDEA has a proven track record of providing underserved children with an exceptional education and preparing them for success in high school and beyond. For 15 years in a row, 100% of its high school seniors have been accepted to colleges and universities nationwide, with 30% earning AP Scholar distinction. Providing students with a competitive academic edge enables them to be prepared for rewarding careers and be productive citizens.

IDEA is dedicated to quality education and the success of all its students and wants to expand its growth in our state. I respectfully ask you to give this application every possible consideration. Thank you for your time and attention in this matter. If I may be of further assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Johnson".

Mark Johnson
State Senator
District 15

MJ:em



Business matters.

July 28, 2021

To the Charter Authorizing Panel:

I firmly believe that every student in our state deserves the opportunity to receive an excellent education. The data would demonstrate that too few students in Central Arkansas – namely, in the Little Rock and North Little Rock areas – have access to a great, free, public school. As such, I support any district or non-profit organization that has a track record of providing underserved children with an exceptional educational.

One such organization is IDEA Public Schools. IDEA has helped 100% of its seniors get into college for each of the last 15 years (IDEA's student body is typically 85 – 90% low-income). This is an achievement that any school in Arkansas, district or charter, would be proud of. IDEA has also helped 30% of its seniors earn AP Scholar distinction, which is a true mark of academic excellence. I support the approval of more schools like this in our state.

Thank you for strongly considering IDEA's application, as well as any other exceptionally high-performing public charter schools that can match these results.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Zook", written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Randy Zook
President/CEO



July 27, 2021

Dear Charter Authorizing Panel:

I write in support of IDEA Public School's application to operate two open-enrollment public charter school campuses in the Little Rock region, starting in 2023.

IDEA has demonstrated an unrivaled ability to launch, operate and sustain excellent schools. IDEA's schools have excelled in Texas and Louisiana with communities and students quite like our own. Its results are not a fluke, as IDEA has brought this same excellence to bear again and again across its 120 schools. In fact, IDEA has helped 100% of its seniors get into college for each of the last 15 years, with a senior class that typically hovers around 90% low-income.

IDEA has also earned top spots on the *U.S. News and World Report* ranking of top high schools. These awards are typically reserved for magnets and schools serving wealthy communities. We need more schools like IDEA in our state, both to serve students and prove what is possible.

Students in the Little Rock area deserve another excellent, free, open-enrollment school, as because of enrollment caps, not all low-income children have access to one. Demand for better options is evidenced by the persistent waitlists for charter schools in the Little Rock area. We need more schools that can meet this demand, and that can raise the bar for academic excellence. IDEA is just such a school. IDEA's academic program, which ensures every student takes at least eleven Advanced Placement courses, will help set a higher bar in our state.

Our hope is that school districts will want to partner with IDEA, as they have in Texas. IDEA has worked in partnership with Midland Independent School District to turn around a failing school. IDEA has also worked with neighboring school districts to train new teachers and employees. If local districts come with open hearts and minds, we believe IDEA's arrival can herald improved results for all of our children.

In our experience, choice improves not only the school chosen, but those competing. And choice should be between or among good to great options.

Our state will be stronger, and our students better prepared for college and citizenship, once IDEA is serving Arkansas's children. We thank you for your service and respectfully urge you to approve IDEA's application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Newton", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Gary Newton
President & CEO

August 4, 2021

To the Charter Authorizing Panel:

I write this letter in support of IDEA Public School's application to operate two charter school campuses in the greater Little Rock area, starting in 2023. IDEA has demonstrated an unrivaled ability to launch, operate, and sustain excellent schools. IDEA's schools have excelled in Texas and Louisiana with communities and students quite like our own. Their results are not a fluke: IDEA has brought this same excellence to bear again and again across their 120 schools. In fact, IDEA has helped 100% of its seniors get into college for each of the last 15 years – a senior body that typically covers around 90% low-income. IDEA has also earned top spots on the US News and World Report ranking of top high schools. These awards are typically reserved for magnets and schools serving wealthy communities. We need more schools like IDEA in our state, both to serve students and prove what is possible.

Students in the Little Rock area deserve an excellent, free, open-enrollment school. Very few low-income children have access to one. Demand for better options is evidenced by the persistent waitlists for charter schools in the city of Little Rock. We need more schools that can meet this demand, and that can raise the bar for academic excellence. IDEA is just such a school. IDEA's academic program, which ensures every student takes at least 11 Advanced Placement courses, will help set a higher bar in our state.

Our hope is that school districts will want to partner with IDEA, as they have in Texas. IDEA has worked in partnership with Midland Independent School District to turnaround a failing school. IDEA has also worked with neighboring school districts to train new teachers and employees. If local districts come with open hearts and minds, I believe IDEA's arrival can herald improved results for all of our children.

My own family benefited from having educational options throughout my children's educational journey. My children attend traditional public schools, charter schools and private schools depending on the needs at various times in their lives. Every family regardless of income and zip code should have that same opportunity.

Our state will be stronger, and our students better prepared for college and citizenship, once IDEA is serving Arkansas's children. We urge you to approve IDEA's application.

Gratefully

Laurie Lee

Diane Tatum – PO Box 20242 – White Hall, AR 71612

July 29, 2021

To the Charter Authorizing Panel:

I firmly believe that every student in our state deserves the opportunity to receive an excellent education. The data would demonstrate that too few students in Central Arkansas – namely, in the Little Rock and North Little Rock areas – have access to a great, free, public school. As such, I support any district or non-profit organization that has a track record of providing underserved children with an exceptional educational.

One such organization is IDEA Public Schools. IDEA has helped 100% of its seniors get into college for each of the last 15 years (IDEA's student body is typically 85 – 90% low-income). This is an achievement that any school in Arkansas, district or charter, would be proud of. IDEA has also helped 30% of its seniors earn AP Scholar distinction, which is a true mark of academic excellence. I support the approval of more schools like this in our state.

Thank you for strongly considering IDEA's application, as well as any other exceptionally high-performing public charter schools that can match these results.

Sincerely,

Diane Tatum