20. Describe the potential impact of the proposed public charter school on the efforts of affected public school district(s) to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools.

Applicant Response:

Northwest Arkansas Children's Shelter (NWACS) is submitting an application for an open-enrollment public charter school to the State's charter authorizer. The charter school, Hope Academy, will be located in Highfill, within the boundaries of the Bentonville School District and, as an open-enrollment public charter school unconfined by district boundaries, expects to continue to obtain most of its students from within the boundaries of the Bentonville (BSD), Rogers (RSD), Decatur (DSD), Gravette (GSD) and Gentry (GESD) School Districts. This analysis is provided to inform the decision making of the charter authorizer regarding the effect, if any, that the granting of a charter to NWACS to operate an open-enrollment charter school within the boundaries of the BSD would have on the efforts of the BSD, RSD, DSD, GSD and the GESD to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools.

NWACS, in this analysis, has carefully reviewed the potential impact that the operation of an open-enrollment public charter school within the boundaries of the BSD would have upon the efforts of the affected school districts to comply with court orders and statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools. In conducting its review, NWACS has found that none of the school districts listed above (BSD, RSD, DSD, GSD and GESD) are under any court orders concerning their desegregation obligations, and are therefore unitary in all respects of their school operations. Therefore, the granting of a charter to operate an open-enrollment charter school cannot be said to have a negative impact on the BSD, RSD, DSD, GSD and the GESD's ability to comply with the districts' statutory obligations to create and maintain a unitary system of desegregated public schools.

According to the 2018-2019 school year enrollment figures (October 1, 2018 student count) as maintained by the ADE Data Center, the BSD had a student population of 17,225 students; the RSD had a student population of 15,604 students; the DSD had a student population of 553 students; the GSD had a student population of 1,877, and the GESD had a student population of 1,442 students. Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-106 requires that NWACS be race-neutral and non-discriminatory in its student selection and admission processes, so it is not possible to accurately project future racial composition. BSD's student population was comprised of approximately 73.1% Caucasian students, 11.59% Hispanic students and 6.3% Asian students. RSD's student population was comprised of approximately 46.3% Hispanic students and 45.4% Caucasian students. DSD's student population was comprised of approximately 52.1% Caucasian students and 36.2% Hispanic students. GSD's student population was comprised of approximately 84.8% Caucasian students and 7% Hispanic students. GESD's student population was comprised of approximately 64.8% Caucasian students, 14.7% Hispanic students and 8.3% Asian students. Ark. Code Ann. §6-23-106 also requires that NWACS's operation of its charter school will not serve to hamper, delay or in any manner negatively affect the desegregation efforts of a public school district or districts within the state. NWACS' careful review of the relevant statutes affecting the BSD, RSD, DSD, GSD and GESD, and the student populations of such districts, shows that such negative effect is not present here. In conclusion, NWACS submits that upon the basis of its review, no statutory or other impediments concerning the creation and operation of desegregated public schools, prohibit the State's charter school authorizer from granting it a charter to operate an open-enrollment public charter school within the boundaries of the Bentonville School District.