

**Indianapolis Public Schools
Statement on Outstanding Bonds**



VIA EMAIL

November 5, 2019

James Betley
Executive Director
Indiana Charter School Board

RE: Charter Applications and Innovation Network School Partnership with Indianapolis Public Schools

Dear Mr. Betley:

Indianapolis Public Schools has been diligent and reflective since the inception of Innovation Network Schools. As partnerships throughout the IPS boundaries have evolved, school takeovers have dwindled and performance at a large percentage of partner schools have met or exceeded expectations. We continue to see exemplary leaders step up and lead in some of the most difficult situations. Our optimism in the Innovation Network School model remains high, along with our expectation of current and prospective partners.

IPS has developed a system of accountability, transparency and communication to ensure that the administration can make a well-reasoned recommendation to our Board as it relates to the renewal or non-renewal of innovation agreements. The district has built a process that includes school visits, board engagement, and reviews of academic results as well as other evaluative measures to ensure that students are served at a high level. See [attached](#) for an overview of the aforementioned framework and a [sample of a Renewal SQR Report](#).

Our decision on renewal or non-renewal of innovation agreements can have a direct impact on the partner's ability to continue to serve students. Such decisions are taken with the utmost seriousness and are not made in a vacuum. We are tentatively slated to discuss the renewal of the Emma Donnan Elementary Agreement at our November 19th and November 21st IPS Board Meetings.

Additionally, you asked for preliminary information on any debt or bond issues related to the facilities at Howe, Manual and Emma Donnan. The below represents a preliminary analysis and opinion of IPS's bond council.

Emma Donnan

The bond issue associated with Emma Donnan will be completely paid off in January 2020, which will then result in the transfer of Emma Donnan from the building corporation to IPS. Therefore, as a practical matter, there should not be any impact on the tax-exemption of Emma Donnan related bonds and no concerns with the bond and Lease covenants as those covenants will no longer apply to Emma Donnan once it is released from the leased premises of the Lease.



Manual

A preliminary review of Manual suggests that not more than 1% of the proceeds of the 2016 bonds refinanced Manual improvements. In addition, not more than 1% of the proceeds of the 2019 refunding bonds refinanced Manual improvements. Therefore, based on a preliminary review of Manual, there should not be any issues related to the tax-exemption of outstanding bonds in the event of a sale, lease or other transfer of Manual to a nongovernmental third party. However, Manual is part of the leased premises for the Lease related to outstanding bonds, and therefore IPS would need to find replacement property for Manual as described above (or defease the related bonds) if there is a lease or transfer of the property in the near future.

Howe

The preliminary review of Howe suggests that likely more than 10% of the proceeds of the 2015 refinanced Howe improvements. If bond proceeds of an outstanding tax-exempt bond were used to improve a school, then sale or leasing of that school to a non-governmental third-party entity could cause a problem with the tax-exemption of the related bonds. A preliminary analysis suggests that if Howe were sold or leased to a non-governmental third party in 2019, the 2015 refunding bonds would have approximately 13% of proceeds used for a private use. In order to get to 0% private use (which would be ideal), IPS would need to defease approximately \$9 million of 2015 Bonds. In order to get to approximately 9% private use, IPS would need to defease approximately \$3 million of the 2015 Bonds. In addition, Howe is part of the leased premises for the Lease related to outstanding bonds, and therefore IPS would need to find replacement property for Howe as described above (or defease the related bonds) if there is a lease or transfer of the property in the near future. Additional tax analyses may indicate a strong likelihood that IPS would be adversely impacted by a sale or lease being currently deliberated.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Jamie VanDeWalle
Chief Portfolio Officer
Indianapolis Public Schools

Public Comment
Indianapolis Public Schools

OPINION

IPS superintendent: Charter Schools USA fails to meet partnership standards

Aleesia Johnson Published 6:00 a.m. ET Dec. 1, 2019

The facts are that CSUSA's tenure at Emma Donnan is littered with high staff turnover, declining enrollment and a proposed future governance structure that was not clearly communicated or understood.

A relentless pursuit of excellence is the foundation of our mission to provide families with access to quality education. We set high standards for everyone who works for, and with, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). Our students deserve it, and our culture demands it.

The district's Portfolio of Schools Model features collaborations with several conscientious and strong education partners. All of these partners know they will be held to the highest possible standards while also participating in a continuous and exhaustive review process.

Indianapolis Public Schools has high expectations for the academic rigor, financial transparency, enrollment sustainability and overall governance health for Innovation Network Schools.

Unfortunately, Charter Schools USA (CSUSA), our Innovation Network School operator at Emma Donnan Elementary School, has failed to perform its responsibilities to our standards.

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Despite the investment during the past several years by IPS, leveraging both the time of our staff and other district resources, the Innovation school partnership with CSUSA for Emma Donnan Elementary School was terminated in November by a unanimous vote of our Board of School Commissioners. [\(https://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2019/11/24/ips-cuts-ties-charter-schools-usa/4262074002/\)](https://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2019/11/24/ips-cuts-ties-charter-schools-usa/4262074002/)

Please note: Emma Donnan will not close, and IPS is committed to its future. In fact, we stand ready to initiate the process of selecting a new Innovation school partner with the input of the Emma Donnan community as part of this process.

In order to begin executing this process, in the coming week, we will ask the Indiana State Board of Education to place all grade levels of the school under IPS' purview so we can seek a path forward for excellence.

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[tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN1026613.245881CADREON%3F](https://eb2.3lift.com/pass?tl_clickthrough=true&redir=https%3A%2F%2Fad.doubleclick.net%2Fddm%2Ftrackclk%2FN1026613.245881CADREON%3F))



As a district, it is our responsibility to provide clarity to students, parents and faculty about this change and why it is necessary. We understand they are caught in the middle, but we cannot abrogate our duty to ensure our schools are operated by partners who operate with honesty and integrity.

This is the first Innovation agreement where the operator's performance has merited termination. Make no mistake, Indianapolis Public Schools will hold our partners accountable and, if required, we will sever ties in the best interests of our students.

The facts are that CSUSA's tenure at Emma Donnan is littered with high staff turnover, declining enrollment and a proposed future governance structure that was not clearly communicated or understood even by members of that proposed future team.



Emma Donnan Elementary and Middle School (Photo: Dylan Peers McCoy/Chalkbeat)

The past few months have seen tremendous progress in the district's investment in the future not only of our students, but also our workforce.

Recently, and as a result of tremendous community support for two successful referendums in 2018, we awarded our teachers the largest pay increases in the history of IPS. These raises, along with investment in stronger security measures, represent promises made and promises kept.

We made our case to the voters based on a renewed strength in the district, a stronger financial model and improved academics. Our Innovation Network School initiative is an important part of all these positive changes and is an exceedingly popular offering in our education portfolio.

Our IPS Board of School Commissioners has acted to ensure our standards for our partner schools are met. Our hope is that other entities with impending decisions on the horizon will do the same.

Our team remains extremely concerned about the future of Thomas Carr Howe High School and Emmerich Manual High School. While I don't doubt that there are hard-working staff serving the students who attend those schools, what is also true are the very real questions that exist about the actual performance of those schools based on recent revelations regarding the graduation cohorts of these schools. Additionally, there remain significant questions regarding the legality of CSUSA being able to buy or rent those facilities for \$1 if granted charters. I will not accept putting Indianapolis Public Schools in a precarious financial circumstance that we are currently working diligently to address.

We know and understand deeply that schools are such valuable parts of our community and, if returned to our IPS family, we would explore all viable opportunities for these schools and their students.

As superintendent, I take seriously the responsibility of ensuring IPS is an excellent family of schools that offers students the very best foundation to live successful futures. We work relentlessly toward that vision every day, and we believe we will realize it with strong and high-quality partners alongside us. It is our belief that Charter Schools USA simply does not meet that standard.

Aleesia Johnson is superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools.



- [Letters: Forefathers provide checks and balances through impeachment process](https://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/readers/2019/11/14/indystar-letters-editor/4181162002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=3045705002)
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From: [Jamie Vandewalle](#)
To: [ICSB Charter Applications](#)
Cc: [Betley, James R \(ICSB\)](#)
Subject: Re: IPS" comment re: Emma Donnan charter
Date: Wednesday, November 27, 2019 7:36:53 PM

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Dean Indiana Charter School Board –

IPS would like to submit an additional comment regarding the future of Emma Donnan. While below we did already share that our intent would not be to close the school, we continue to gain clarity around our plan.

IPS requests the ability to have the Emma Donnan facility in our overall portfolio and seek community input into the future of the school. We will take several opportunities to present and share options to the teachers, students, families, and surrounding community members if the charter is not granted to CSUSA/ReThink Forward Indiana.

Again – we reiterate as we did in our [family letter and staff letter](#) (sent out week of 11/19 and posted to our website since that time) that our objectives are to find a partner with strong local ties and maintain as much continuity for the students as possible. The data from our Renewal School Quality Review did not indicate that the management of Emma Donnan under CSUSA/ReThink Forward Indiana would be financially sustainable nor could they gain the enrollment needed in their charter applications without participating in Enroll Indy. The building is woefully underutilized – having under 450 students in building with capacity for nearly 1800. The enrollment trends at Emma indicate that families are not choosing the school.

We received several Letters of Interest for Innovation network schools this fall, and at least three of those parties are interested in being a part of the matching process for Emma Donnan. The southside community has been clear that they want choices about future educational options in their community, and we plan to respond to this desire. Each of the applicants we are considering has a track record of success serving a similar population of students. Their results at their former schools exceed that of the current leadership under Emma Donnan on one or more standardized measures. Each of them is eager to be introduced to prospective families and community members. Our current plan is to begin to make broader introductions rapidly once we know the outcome of the December 13th chartering process. We would aim to complete the matching process before the end of January, 2020, via a series of parent forums, focus groups, and small-group meetings. IPS will consider each parties' proposed model against what families are saying they want in their school and how teachers would feel about staying and working with the partner. As we have done in the past, we offer surveys at our community meetings and use this input to guide the selection and the process. Our goal is to make a recommendation to the IPS Board during the week of January 27 and have an Innovation agreement complete at the mid-March, 2020 IPS Board meeting.

We are holding our first large-scale community meeting on December 2nd at the Tube Factory. This

date is on the website, has been shared via social media, and was included in a letter mailed to families on November 21. We are also planning an additional community session the following week. We are [seeking feedback](#) from families about what they want to see in the school already and will use that information as we engage with potential partners.

We feel that this approach will contribute to the long-term success of not only the school but also to having a high-quality option for that area of our city. Our chosen partner must be one that is responsive to the voices of the community and will work in partnership with IPS for a locally-governed, accountable, and sustainable solution for the families it serves.

Jamie VanDeWalle | Chief Portfolio Officer | **Indianapolis Public Schools** | 120 E Walnut St, Indianapolis, IN 46204 | 317.832.6445 – mobile | vandewallej@myips.org
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From: Jamie Vandewalle <vandewallej@myips.org>
Date: Monday, November 25, 2019 at 7:28 PM
To: "charter-applications@icsb.in.gov" <charter-applications@icsb.in.gov>
Subject: IPS' comment re: Emma Donnan charter

Dear Indiana Charter Schools Board -

As most of you have now heard, the Indianapolis Public Schools Board of School Commissioners voted 7-0 last week to non-renew the Innovation Agreement between CSUSA and IPS. After a thorough and rigorous analysis we determined it would be in the best interest of the students, staff, community, and district as a whole to transition management of the school. We do not intend to close the school.

As I shared with our board on November 19th, this situation required us to look back at the performance of not only the elementary school, but also of the middle school, since a five-year renewal of the agreement assumed a unified K-8 school. We were evaluating the viability of the K-8 to continue to provide a robust, high-quality educational experience for its students. While we were excited to see that the school had bright spots in academic performance over the last two years, that did not outweigh our concerns.

We set a high standard for all of our schools, Innovation and direct-managed. Innovation schools are held to a different level of scrutiny given their additional autonomy, and we modeled an extensive Renewal Framework off of our current School Quality Review process coupled with what we see from the highest quality charter authorizers. The CSUSA/NEI management of Emma did not meet our bar.

The K-8 has lost almost 200 students since the 2016-2017 school year. When we ran staff retention off of the roster provided to us by the school, we got 50% for last year to now. To contrast, IPS's average last year was 84%. When we looked back at Emma Donnan Elementary's staff retention over the last three years, less than 10% of the staff that was there 3 years ago is still there today. In some of our hardest to staff schools, that number is

nearly 2.5 times higher.

Based on feedback from many staff during our review process, morale and organizational trust was affected by the precipitous drop in enrollment and staff retention, and that concern could be felt via inconsistent application and execution in the classroom.

Again - We do not wish to see the school close or displace any students for next year. We believe the students and staff of the school deserve more stability than what the numbers above demonstrate. We vow to be open in communication with all impacted and seek their input to move forward towards next year in a way that is most stabilizing for families, and have already made several attempts to do so. We look forward to the opportunity to work with community and families on a strong path forward.

Jamie VanDeWalle | Chief Portfolio Officer | **Indianapolis Public Schools** | 120 E Walnut St, Indianapolis, IN 46204 | 317.832.6445 – mobile | vandewallej@myips.org

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From: [ICSB Charter Applications](#)
To: [Betley, James R \(ICSB\)](#); [Abston, Bridgett](#)
Subject: Fw: IPS" comment re: Emma Donnan charter
Date: Monday, November 25, 2019 8:01:09 PM

From: Jamie Vandewalle <vandewallej@myips.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2019 12:28 AM
To: ICSB Charter Applications <Charter-Applications@icsb.in.gov>
Subject: IPS' comment re: Emma Donnan charter

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Jamie VanDeWalle | Chief Portfolio Officer | **Indianapolis Public Schools** | 120 E Walnut St, Indianapolis, IN 46204 | 317.832.6445 – mobile | vandewallej@mvips.org

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Public Comment – ReTHink Forward, Inc.

Indianapolis Public Schools is a school corporation that currently serves more than 32,000 students from across the city, from pre-k to high school. As the state's largest school corporation, we have evolved in significant ways since state turnaround was initiated more than seven years ago, in 2012. With a new superintendent and a strong Board of School Commissioners, IPS is not the same school corporation it was 50 years ago, let alone 7 years ago.

For the past 6 years, IPS leadership, which includes the Board of School Commissioners and the administration have been engaged with the district's community and many others on several fronts addressing critical issues like long-term sustainability, and a commitment to strategically managing the district's educational offerings within the limited resources available. The 2019 IPS leadership team, none of whom were part of the IPS leadership team at the time that Howe, Manual and Emma Donnan were placed in turnaround in 2012, welcomes the opportunity to deliver on its commitment without limits caused by prior local leadership teams.

Today's IPS leadership team requests the ability to decide how to best serve IPS students with IPS assets and local tax dollars in conjunction with the input of these school communities.

As many of you know, IPS is conducting a Facilities Optimization Study which includes the buildings currently housing CSUSA Turnaround Academies. The outcomes of this study will ensure that IPS continues to build a path to future sustainability across all our buildings. IPS must retain its ability to strategically manage its long-term facility footprint, capital plan, and debt obligations at the local level which would be weakened, causing undue burden to not just IPS, the school corporation but the entire IPS community at-large.

It's clear that IPS and countless community members wish for there to be local control of the buildings governed by the locally elected IPS Board of School Commissioners and decide not to leave the heart of the City of Indianapolis with significant debt payments. Additionally, IPS has shown a willingness to collaborate and partner with the right entity that has a track record of success in the community and the classroom through our Innovation Network School partnerships with 14 charter schools, most of whom use an IPS facility. That willingness has not changed and will be done appropriately in a rigorous and transparent manner. However, that will not be the case in regard to Manual, Howe, and Emma Donnan with the current operators at this time.

Ahmed Young – General Counsel, IPS

Public Comment
OEI & Task Force

From: [McAlister, Patrick](#)
To: [ICSB Charter Applications](#)
Cc: [Betley, James R \(ICSB\)](#)
Subject: Public comment for ReThink Forward's charter school applications
Date: Tuesday, November 26, 2019 1:55:23 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

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Members of the Indiana Charter School Board:

My name is Patrick McAlister and I am the Director of the Office of Education Innovation. Our office authorizes 40 schools that serve more than 16,000 students in Marion County. I'd like to offer my perspective as a fellow authorizer.

Authorizers must consider past performance when deciding whether to grant a charter. If my office received an application from Charter Schools USA, Noble Education Initiative or ReThink Forward Indiana, I would recommend that our board reject them. I am concerned that the schools are not financially sustainable. In Indiana, dollars follow the student. It's not clear that CSUSA will come anywhere close to meeting the enrollment goals in its applications.

Superintendent Alesia Johnson and the board of commissioners have been incredible partners on Innovation Network School agreements and clearly have their students' best interests in mind. This is why I support Superintendent Johnson and the communities of Howe, Manual, and Emma Donnan to determine their own futures. We look forward to working with IPS to continue ensuring Indianapolis students receive a high-quality education.

Patrick McAlister

Director

Office of Education Innovation

Office of the Mayor – City of Indianapolis

☎:317.327.5527

Patrick.McAlister@indy.gov



November 27, 2019

Dear Director Betley and esteemed members of the Indiana Charter School Board:

The southside community is imploring the Indiana Charter School Board to cautiously consider your decision to authorize charters to ReThink Forward Indiana and Noble Education Initiative for Emma Donnan Middle School and Emmerich Manual High School. The School Transition Taskforce was a failed process that resulted in the State Board of Education directing Charter Schools USA, a for-profit company, to pursue a charter for three schools, including Donnan and Manual. This was done in spite of the community's and IPS's request to delay the vote for 30 days to evaluate alternative options in partnership with IPS. It was also done in spite of grave concerns the community raised about CSUSA and the Transition Taskforce itself (see enclosures).

As a community, we have worked since the Transition Taskforce began and continued our work after the Taskforce concluded to advocate for high-quality education and accountability for Emma Donnan Middle School and Emmerich Manual High School. We have outlined the key concerns from the community regarding Charter Schools USA and their nonprofit affiliates ReThink Forward and Noble Education Initiative below:

Integrity of reporting and tracking

- Homeschooling – CSUSA and its affiliates have failed to address that for every 50 graduates there are 36 students counted as leaving Manual High School to homeschool rather than as dropouts, which is 12 times the state average. If those students had been counted as dropouts, Manual's graduation rates would have been 50 percent compared to the 78 percent reported. T.C. Howe had similarly alarming rates and CSUSA stands out in the state for blatant misrepresentation of student and graduation data.
- The unethical exploitation of homeschool laws is just one example of poor integrity for reporting data and tracking information. During the School Transition Taskforce, the community was consistently faced with obstruction or obfuscation when requesting information from CSUSA. For example, we requested aggregated census track level data to better understand where students lived. CSUSA would not provide the information, so the IPS representative on the Taskforce provided it using shared data between CSUSA and IPS.

Teacher and Staff Retention

- IPS's Renewal School Quality Review for Emma Donnan Elementary revealed poor staff retention with only 50% of staff retained last year and less than 10% total three-year-retention rate.
- IPS's Review validates ongoing community concerns with staff turnover at Manual High School as we have seen numerous administrators and community engagement liaisons leave the school.

- The exceptionally high number of unlicensed teachers, especially inexperienced teachers in programs like Teach for America and Teaching Fellows, is deeply concerning from a retention standpoint as well as for ensuring high-quality instruction.

Community Accountability

- CSUSA has not actively and consistently engaged the community prior to the Taskforce process or following the State Board of Education recommendations.
- ReThink Forward and Noble Education Initiative have done no outreach into the community and have leadership who have ignored requests to engage in dialogue.

Public Facilities

- The community does not support any effort by CSUSA and its affiliates to access the public facilities using the \$1 law. These buildings have not been vacant for any time and they have been used for classroom instruction. The only vacancy present in the facilities is due to CSUSA's failure to successfully grow enrollment.
- In addition, IPS has outstanding bonds on Manual High School (as well as T.C. Howe) and taxpayers do not support a for-profit company and its affiliated nonprofits seeking a public facility for \$1 with tax payers supporting debt service payments under any circumstances.

Long-term Sustainability

- Pedagogy – Cambridge is not a well-respected program in the education community and it lacks recognition within the Indianapolis ecosystem and among parents generally. In a competitive educational landscape, this is not a sustainable choice to grow enrollment nor do we believe it is a high-quality, rigorous academic option for students.
- Marketing and recruiting – lack of participation in Enroll Indy, the unified enrollment system for Marion County, and other mainstream recruitment opportunities like Showcase of Schools demonstrates a lack of knowledge about ways parents and students are choosing their schools and / or lack of commitment to proven recruitment methods.
 - Additionally, the recent decision by the IPS Administration and Board to not renew the Innovation agreement with CSUSA for Emma Donnan Elementary – a decision the community publicly supported – is profound. Donnan Elementary is the pipeline for Donnan Middle, which is the pipeline for Manual High School. These schools are already facing enrollment challenges (declining enrollment at the Elementary was one of many reasons cited by IPS for not renewing the agreement). This will exacerbate the issue further.
- Financial sustainability – CSUSA has been operating with a larger budget than they would as an IPS school and will operate with even less than a traditional public school should they become a charter; however, this was never fully addressed during the Taskforce process, despite multiple requests.
 - Transportation, for example (in the Taskforce report), CSUSA has allocated \$670 per student for transportation – 56% of what it currently receives as a turnaround academy.

- The applicant's vision for growing enrollment, a key aspect of financial sustainability, is very unconvincing in the charter applications. This is particularly salient for our group comprised of people living in the area who have either been alienated by CSUSA or are apathetic to what they believe is a failing school.
- Facility Usage - Manual and TC Howe have exceptionally high per student operational costs compared to their peer high schools due to low enrollment and large facilities. There have been no plans to address this issue made public other than inappropriately accessing the public facilities for \$1.

The Taskforce, a body biased by design to support CSUSA and its affiliates' pursuit of a charter, still only offered its support for CSUSA to pursue charters, under the following conditions:

1. The charter school authorizer determines that each charter application demonstrates financial and operational sustainability.
2. The charter schools' organizer(s) shall include, on its Board, a majority of directors who are parents/guardians of a current student or who reside in one of the zip codes in or adjacent to 46203 and 46201 – the areas in which the schools are located.

The Indiana Charter School Board is an expert in evaluating the first condition outlined by the Taskforce, as this is something that is evaluated with every charter application. It our coalition's position that they have failed to meet this condition based on the information we have available at this time. In addition, we believe they have also failed to meet the second condition to have a majority of directors who are parents / guardians of a current student or who reside in one of the zip codes in or adjacent to 46203 and 46201. The community requested that specific neighborhoods or census blocks be used rather than zip codes and that adjacent zip codes be removed, due to large coverage area of zip codes; however, this request was denied during the Taskforce process. We would like to request the Indiana Charter School Board evaluate whether CSUSA and its affiliates have satisfactorily met these conditions.

The community has been constantly engaged with IPS and recently learned the following from the IPS Administration:

- IPS is very appreciative of the ongoing willingness to partner in finding a strong solution and increasing quality options on the southside of Indy.
- IPS will be ready to share publicly and talk at the State Board of Education meeting on December 4, 2019 about plans for Emma Donnan – to run a process whereby the community (parents, teachers, surrounding members) is offered the opportunity for agency and input in the future operation of the school. There are several possible Innovation partners who are interested and IPS will share feedback from engagements so far, and then begin introducing them to constituents soon.
- IPS is deeply exploring details of a potential partner to operate Manual. In so doing, IPS would do their best to ensure stability for the current staff and students and would not displace students. Any arrangement would honor the legacy of the school to date.

Southside Education Community Coalition



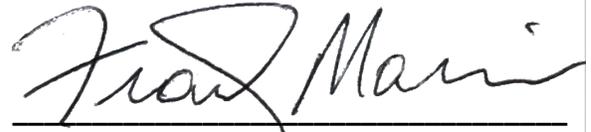
Aryn Schounce
Southside Community Representative
School Transition Taskforce



Representative Justin Moed
State Representative, District 97
Indiana House of Representatives



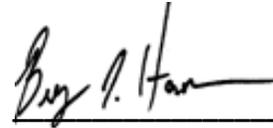
Councillor – Elect Kristin Jones
Councillor – Elect, District 16
Indianapolis City-County Council



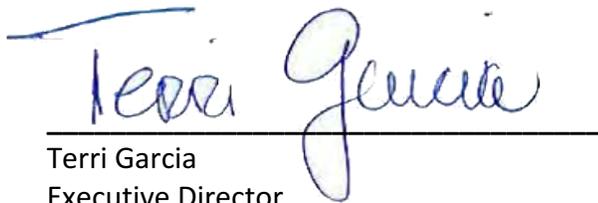
Councillor Frank Mascari
Councillor, District 21
Indianapolis City-County Council



Michelle Strahl-Salines
Director
SoIndy Quality of Life Plan



Bryan Hannon
Chair, Advisory Board
SoIndy Quality of Life Plan



Terri Garcia
Executive Director
Southeast Community Services



Kelli Mirgeaux
President
Southeast Neighborhood Development



Erin Brown
Co-chair, Education Committee
Garfield Park Neighbors Association



Ed Mahern
Co-chair, Education Committee
Garfield Park Neighbors Association

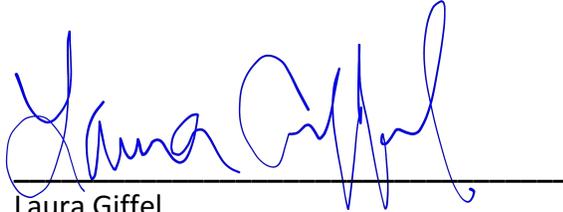
Southside Education Community Coalition



Cheryl Dillenback
President
Garfield Park Neighbors Association



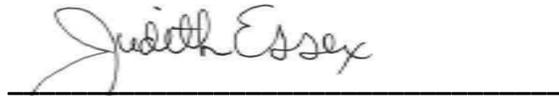
Bernie Price
President
Bean Creek Neighborhood Association



Laura Giffel
President
Bates-Hendricks Neighborhood Association



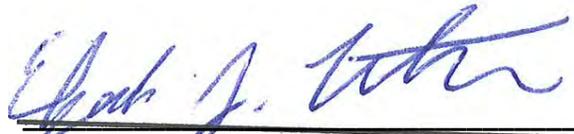
Ike McCoy
President
Carson Heights Neighborhood Association



Judith Essex
President
Old Southside Neighborhood Association



Laura Piercefield
President
South Village Neighborhood Association



Beth Whitaker
Southside Community Organizer



Eamonn Brandon
Southside Community Organizer



Glenn Blackwood
Past President
Fletcher Place Neighborhood Association

March 3, 2019

Dear Dr. Kwiatkowski and esteemed members of the Indiana State Board of Education:

The south side community is imploring Governor Holcomb's Office and the Indiana State Board of Education to delay any decisions regarding the future of Emma Donnan Elementary and Middle School, Emmerich Manual High School, and Thomas Carr Howe Community High School. The community has grave concerns about the integrity of process itself (outlined below) and we also understand that IPS is able to take a position on this issue and present additional options due to recent changes in their leadership.

As the south side community representative for the School Transition Taskforce, I have consulted with community members and have outlined their primary concerns regarding the process here:

- The composition of Taskforce membership is inherently skewed in favor of recommending CSUSA to pursue a charter;
- The three choices presented to community members does not provide a set of alternatives and the community was never provided an opportunity to ask questions to Indianapolis Public School Corporation in a public forum about different pathways, if the schools were returned to that corporation;
- It was difficult to receive requested information from CSUSA in a timely fashion, and the information the community received was often incomplete. This was one of the most egregious failures in terms of transparency and many examples can be provided;
- Special interest groups received inappropriate influence and very few parents in the community were actually consulted or engaged;
- Community meetings were formatted in such a way that it only provided an avenue for CSUSA to sell their perspective, and failed to present any other viewpoints or opportunity for open dialogue;
- Genuine community outreach has not occurred and community feedback is being misrepresented from survey data and attendance at meetings that represent the same individuals being counted multiple times, making this data corrupt.

I, along with my neighbors, have tried to give the facilitator, Charlie Schlegel, and the Taskforce the benefit of the doubt in providing a fair and transparent process, despite the unlikelihood of that outcome, given the circumstances at the outset. After many conversations and lack of progress on both fair and transparent proceedings, we felt the only option available to us at this time is to request a delay so that we can better understand alternative pathways available to the community.

The community is joined by IPS in urging the State Board to delay their decision. We are requesting this delay for four important reasons:

1. The process has failed.
2. IPS, due to the community's concerns and a recent change in leadership, is willing to work on a number of routes to keep Manual open as high school. Among those options, two pathways under consideration include Manual becoming a part of IPS' Choice Innovation Network or reverting back to IPS' as the operator. We understand that IPS was offered an opportunity by

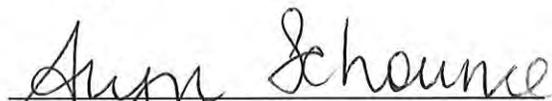
the SBOE to take a different position in the past; however, recent changes in IPS' leadership have catalyzed this changed position and made a new dialogue possible.

3. The community data is corrupted. The facilitator is claiming to the State Board a wildly inflated number of community member outreach that ignores the fact that several individuals took the survey multiple times and attended all the events, but were counted as unique individuals.
4. There is no urgency to the vote in March, however, there are compelling reasons to delay the vote.

With IPS being the property owner and recent changes within IPS's leadership potentially opening up a dialogue that wasn't possible before, we ask that we are provided with more time. I am joined in this request by four neighborhoods in the immediate areas serving by Emma Donnan and Emmerich Manual, as well as the South Indy Quality of Life Plan, which represents eight south side neighborhoods.

It is disappointing to residents this process has failed; however, it is clear from community input that closing the schools is not in the interest of our neighborhoods – what is not clear is the best pathway forward, which is what the process was intended to provide. In spite of this, we remain committed to continuing a dialogue and working diligently to keep high-quality education options available to the children and families in our community.

Sincerely,

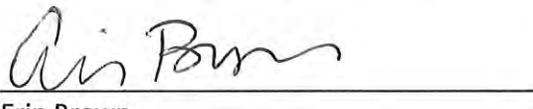

Aryn Schoune
Southside Community Representative
School Transition Taskforce

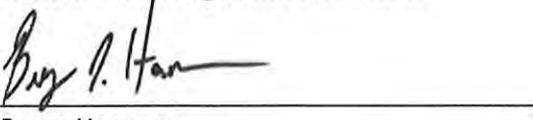

Jason Fletcher
President
Carson Heights Neighborhood Association,


Laura Giffel
President
Bates-Hendricks Neighborhood Association


Cheryl Dillenback
President
Garfield Park Neighbors Association,


Bernie Price
President
Bean Creek Neighborhood Association


Erin Brown
Education Committee Chair
Garfield Park Neighbors Association


Bryan Hannon
Advisory Board Chair
South Indy Quality of Life Plan

February 19, 2019

Fellow School Transition Taskforce Members:

First, I would like to thank you for the time you have committed to the School Transition Taskforce. As a volunteer community member myself, I understand the sacrifice of time and energy it takes to serve and I commend you for your dedication.

Second, I am writing to inform you that I cannot participate in making a recommendation to the Indiana State Board of Education regarding the future of Emma Donnan Elementary and Middle School, Emmerich Manual High School, and Thomas Carr Howe Community High School. I have consulted with community members and, based on their concerns about the process, I will not participate in this disputed process for the following reasons:

- The composition of Taskforce membership is inherently skewed in favor of recommending CSUSA to pursue a charter;
- The three choices presented to community members does not provide a set of alternatives and never provided an opportunity to ask questions to Indianapolis Public School Corporation about different pathways, if the schools were returned to that corporation;
- It was difficult to receive requested information from CSUSA in a timely fashion, and the information the community received was often incomplete. This was one of the most egregious failures in terms of transparency and many examples can be provided;
- Special interest groups received inappropriate influence and very few parents in the community were actually consulted or engaged;
- Community meetings were formatted in such a way that it only provided an avenue for CSUSA to sell their perspective, and failed to present any other viewpoints or opportunity for open dialogue;
- Genuine community outreach has not occurred and community feedback is being misrepresented from survey data and attendance at meetings that represent the same individuals being counted multiple times, making this data corrupt.

I, along with my neighbors, have tried to give the facilitator, Charlie Schlegel, and the Taskforce the benefit of the doubt in providing a fair and transparent process, despite the unlikelihood of that outcome, given the circumstances at the outset. After consulting with several community members, this was the only appropriate action the group felt I could take to represent their concerns and dissatisfaction with the process. I will be taking additional steps to articulate the community's concerns, should the Taskforce recommend CSUSA pursue a charter, in the following ways:

- Statement to the Indiana State Board of Education
- Statement to the Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Statement to each charter authorizer to which CSUSA has submitted a LOI
- Statement to Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis

It is disappointing to residents this process has failed; however, it is clear from community input that closing the schools is not in the interest of our neighborhoods – what is not clear is the best

pathway forward, which is what the process was intended to provide. In spite of this, we remain committed to continuing a dialogue and working diligently to keep high-quality education options available to the children and families in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aryn Schounce". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "A".

Aryn Schounce
School Transition Taskforce, Southside Community Representative
Garfield Park Neighbors Association, Education Committee Member

CC: Charlie Schlegel
Joe Mount
Ron Sandlin