

EXHIBIT A



Public Charter
SCHOOL DISTRICT

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January 23, 2023

Via Email and Certified Mail

Nadine Deif, Board Chair
ndeif@caahighschool.org
Charleston Advancement Academy
7000 Rivers Avenue, Bldg. 100
N. Charleston, South Carolina 29405

**Re: Notice of Charter Revocation and Contract Termination
Notice of Final Decision regarding Transfer Request**

Dear Chair Deif:

I am writing to formally notify you that the South Carolina Public Charter School District Board of Trustees (District Board) **denies** the request of Charleston Advancement Academy (CAA) to transfer to Limestone Charter Association (Limestone) pursuant to the South Carolina Charter Schools Act of 1996, S.C. Code Ann. 59-40-10 to -240 (the Act) and the District Board's Transfer Policy. Further, the District Board also voted to provide you this **Notice of Charter Revocation and Contract Termination (Notice of Revocation)** pursuant to the Act based on the following grounds:

- (1) CAA committed a material violation of the conditions, standards, performance expectations or procedures provided for in the charter school application or charter school contract; or both.
- (2) CAA failed to meet the academic performance standards and expectations as defined in the charter school application or charter school contract, or both.

The grounds for the Notice of Revocation are set forth below in reasonable detail as required by Section 59-40-110 of the Act.

South Carolina Public Charter School District

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Notice: Pursuant to Section 59-40-110(H), the CAA Board may request in writing a hearing before the SCPCSD Board within fourteen days of receiving this Notice of Revocation.

Procedural Background

On September 30, 2022, Charleston Advancement Academy (CAA) submitted a request to transfer its charter pursuant to the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-115 and the South Carolina Public Charter School District (District) Transfer Policy. CAA requested the District Board of Trustees (District Board) considered the request as soon as possible, and the District Board initially scheduled the request to be heard at its November 10, 2022 meeting. However, due to events beyond the District's control and consistent with the District Board's Transfer Policy, the District Board notified CAA on November 4, 2022 that the District Board would consider the request at its regularly scheduled meeting on December 15, 2022, January 19, 2023, or February 9, 2023. On January 4, 2023, the District provided formal notice that the District Board would consider the transfer request at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 19, 2023. The District provided CAA the opportunity to submit any written materials it wished to submit in advance of the January 19 meeting, and CAA submitted supporting materials both with its transfer request and on January 17, 2023. CAA representatives also appeared before the SCPCSD Board at the January 19 meeting to present information and answer questions from the SCPCSD Board. The SCPCSD Board has carefully considered all the information submitted to it as well as information presented to it in the ordinary course of its duties related to CAA while making its decisions.

Transfer Request

On January 12, 2023, the District provided a Transfer Report to the SCPCSD Board and CAA. The Transfer Report provided a summary of information relevant to the factors the Transfer Policy either expressly required or permitted the Board to consider. After duly considering all the available information, the District notes the following in support of its decision to deny the transfer:

- (1) No Memorandum of Agreement, statute, regulation, or State Department of Education Policy sets forth the roles and responsibilities of the sponsors to accomplish the transfer process.
- (2) Legislation before the South Carolina General Assembly would address, in part, the process for school transfers.
- (3) The SCPCSD has approved four new schools to open next year.

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- (4) Since CAA was granted its charter in 2017, its Board has terminated at least two management companies and four school leaders.
- (5) CAA's reasons for transfer are almost entirely related to events that transpired in 2019 and under a prior SCPCSD Superintendent.
- (6) CAA currently has an interim school leader with two administrative level employees on administrative leave. Employees have alleged wrongdoing on behalf of the school and have threatened legal action.
- (7) CAA recently authorized the board chair to negotiate and execute a potential lease for space the school was considering in downtown Charleston. CAA did not inform the District about this potential lease.
- (8) CAA is considering not renewing the lease for its James Island campus. CAA informed the District of this fact in its submission in support of transfer.
- (9) CAA employees have threatened grievances and legal claims because of the leadership change.
- (10) While every student CAA graduates deserves celebration, CAA is not meeting academic performance goals as set forth in its Charter and Contract.
- (11) CAA is not spending adequate funds on academic services and is mismanaging taxpayer funds considering the reserves it maintains and academic performance it is achieving.

Based on the above, the District Board concluded the transfer request should be denied. The absence of any legally required or contractually binding transfer process creates significant concern that the transfer process could negatively impact students and/or the District's ability to serve other schools, students and families that are not transferring. Moreover, CAA operations are not stable, lacking even a permanent school leader and full administrative staff with the potential for having to relocate one of its campuses during the transfer process. Finally, the CAA Board has accumulated funds in its reserve account while failing to meet its charter goals and objectives. All these factors weigh against granting the transfer request, and the SCPCSD Board therefor voted to deny the transfer request.

Notice of Revocation

Following the vote to deny the transfer request, upon proper motion, the SCPCSD Board voted to revoke the CAA charter and terminate the CAA contract as of June 30, 2023 pursuant to the timelines for revocation set forth in the Charter Act. Accordingly, the District hereby sends you this Notice of Revocation. If you disagree with the District Board's decision to revoke, you may request a hearing before the District Board pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. 59-40-110(H).

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The grounds for revocation are as follows:

- (1) CAA committed a material violation of the conditions, standards, performance expectations or procedures provided for in the charter school application or charter school contract; or both.
- (2) CAA failed to meet the academic performance standards and expectations as defined in the charter school application or charter school contract, or both.

The facts supporting the SCPCSD Board’s decision are in the information submitted to the SCPCSD prior to and at the January 19, 2023 board meeting related to the transfer request. The SCPCSD Board also relied on prior submissions specific to CAA and its historical knowledge of CAA’s performance since the SCPCSD Board granted CAA its charter in 2017. A summary of relevant facts include:

- (1) CAA failed to meet its self-identified “critical goals” based on a minimum graduation rate of 65% and at least 40% of students earning at least six credits per academic year.
- (2) PowerSchool data shows CAA’s 4 year adjusted cohort graduation rate, 2019-2022, as:

	2019	2020	2021	2022
School (CAA)	1.10%	4.40%	10.10%	8.80%
District	72.30%	71.20%	75.90%	71.70%
State	81.10%	82.20%	83.30%	83.80%

- (3) PowerSchool Data shows the average number of credits earned or maintained by CAA student by school year is shown by:

	9th	10th	11th	12th	ALL
2019-2020	3.8%	39.86%	61.79%	61.29%	30.61%
2020-2021	2.13%	8.28%	15.6%	16.87%	10.39%
2021-2022	2.33%	2.22%	.89%	4.8%	2.23%

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- (4) The average number of credits earned for CAA students, per year, is shown as follows:

2018-2019	3.36 credits per student
2019-2020	3.19 credits per student
2020-2021	2.14 credits per student
2021-2022	1.5 credits per student

- (5) CAA has not created or not reported benchmarks for other academic measures as required by its charter goals.
- (6) CAA data did not show CAA's Charter goals were being met or timely progress towards meeting the Charter goals.
- (7) CAA has increased its fund balance from \$126,014 in 2019 to \$3,452,637 as of June 30, 2022. The fund balance showed a net change of \$1,534,366 during the past fiscal year.
- (8) PowerSchool data shows 771 enrollments in 2021-2022 and approximately 36 students continuously enrolled from the beginning of the 2021-22 school year through the end of the same school year.
- (9) According to publicly available testing data from the South Carolina Department of Education, no more than 64 students took an End-of-Course (EOC) exam in any one subject (English, Algebra, Biology, US History/Constitution).
- (10) In both 2020 and 2021-2022, most CAA students that took an EOC earned a failing score.
- (11) Based on the Special Education Capacity & Growth Index (CGI), CAA is a Tier 3 (high level of support) school. During the first semester of 2022-2023, identified weaknesses for CAA included lack of appropriate special education certifications and proper caseload ratios. Those issues were corrected after being identified by the District.
- (12) After terminating its second management company in favor of self-management by the CAA Board in 2020, the SCPCSD supported CAA in an amendment of its charter effective approximately September 2021, including the amendment of its charter goals.
- (13) In December 2022, parents and faculty voted to replace the CAA Board Chair and Vice-Chair with new board members. The CAA Board Chair and Vice-Chair subsequently appointed the former Chair and Vice-Chair to vacant board seats and re-elected the Board Chair and Vice-Chair to their officer positions.
- (14) Following the reappointment of the Board Chair and Vice-Chair, the Head of School resigned.

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- (15) Upon appointment of an interim leader, three administrative leaders at CAA were placed on paid leave and remain on paid leave.
- (16) At a recent specially called CAA board meeting, the CAA board referenced a facility lease about which the District had not been informed.
- (17) The CAA Board did not consult with its parent advisory committee, if it exists, regarding these changes.

Based on the above, the Board concluded the criteria for revocation exist for CAA. It has failed to meet academic goals and expectations year after year. The CAA Board has failed to expend funds to assist with academics in lieu of other priorities. Moreover, the CAA Board has not adequately considered the will of CAA parents, students, and faculty in taking actions that did not prioritize student achievement. Finally, the CAA Board has shown no willingness to address the noncompliant academic performance of CAA.

Therefore, the Board voted to revoke the charter and terminate the contract of CAA effective June 30, 2023.

Notice: Pursuant to Section 59-40-110(H), the CAA Board may request in writing a hearing before the SCPCSD Board within fourteen days of receiving this Notice of Revocation.

Sincerely,



John S. Payne
Chairman, SCPCSD Board of Trustees

cc: James Island Campus (1484 Camp Road, Charleston, SC 29412)
Wayne Stevens, Registered Agent
CAA Board Members (Email only)
CAA Legal Counsel (Email only)
SCPCSD Board Members (Email only)
Chris Neeley, SCPCSD Superintendent
SCPCSD Legal Counsel (Email only)

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