

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education

Early College High School
October 10, 2017

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STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER SCHOOL OFFICE

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING FOR RENEWAL (UPDATED)
EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL AT DSU
CHARTER SCHOOL

Townsend Building
401 Federal Street
2nd Floor Cabinet Room
Dover, Delaware

Tuesday, October 10, 2017
5:10 p.m.

BEFORE: CATHERINE T. HICKEY, ESQ.
Deputy Attorney General for
the State Board of Education

DONNA JOHNSON,
State Board Executive Director

DENISE STOUFFER,
Lead Education Associate,
Charter School Office

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1 MS. STOUFFER: Good evening,
2 everyone. Thank you for being patient as we
3 were able to readjust our room from our
4 previous meeting.

5 Good evening. I declare this
6 public meeting to be open. My name is Denise
7 Stouffer, and I'm the lead education
8 associate. I have been appointed by the
9 Secretary of Education to conduct this public
10 hearing.

11 The Early College High School at
12 Delaware State University charter school has
13 filed an application to renew its charter for
14 a term of five years. As is required by law,
15 this matter was referred to the Charter School
16 Accountability Committee for investigation and
17 report. This joint public hearing is being
18 held by the Department of Education and the
19 State Board of Education.

20 I'd like to introduce Donna
21 Johnson of the State Board of Education.

22 MS. JOHNSON: Hello.

23 MS. STOUFFER: And Catherine
24 Hickey, a deputy attorney general for the



1 Department of Education.

2 I would like the record to
3 reflect that the public notice of the time,
4 date and place of today's public hearing was
5 published in The News Journal and the Delaware
6 State News on September 9th, 2017. In
7 addition, notice was posted at the Charter
8 School Accountability Committee's official
9 place of business, on the Delaware Department
10 of Education's official website, and on the
11 State Public Meeting Calendar on the state's
12 official website. Further, the Early College
13 High School at Delaware State University
14 charter school was personally notified of the
15 time, date and place of today's public hearing
16 on September 9th, 2017.

17 A court reporter is present so
18 that the record of this hearing can be made.
19 It will be necessary for each speaker to
20 clearly identify his- or herself before
21 beginning to speak so that the court reporter
22 will be able to note who you are. The record
23 of this hearing will be provided to the
24 Secretary of Education and the members of the



1 State Board of Education, together with any
2 written or electronic comments received during
3 the course of the renewal decision process.
4 To date, there have been no comments received
5 on this renewal application.

6 We will proceed in the following
7 manner. First, we will hear from any
8 representatives of the charter school who wish
9 to comment on the renewal application. Then
10 we will take comments from anyone else who
11 desires to speak. There was a sign-up sheet
12 at the door. And there continues to be a
13 sign-up sheet in the back of the room on the
14 table right outside the door. If you desire
15 to speak -- and you haven't done so already --
16 please sign up now. I will pause for a moment
17 for anyone who desires to sign up to speak.

18 Okay. Can I please have a show
19 of hands of who desires to make a comment this
20 evening so I can determine whether it may be
21 necessary to impose a time limit?

22 I'd like to go off the record a
23 moment.
24



1 (A brief discussion was held off
2 the record.)

3 MS. STOUFFER: Considering the
4 number of people that would like to speak, I
5 would like to be as liberal as possible with
6 the time. However, I'd like everyone to limit
7 their comments to five minutes. I also
8 reserve the right to limit comment if it's
9 purely repetitive or cumulative.

10 At this point I will accept
11 comments from any representatives of the
12 school.

13 DR. HORTON: Good evening.

14 My name is Marsha Horton. I'd
15 like to start this evening with a brief
16 explanation of what an early college high
17 school is.

18 The early college model is an
19 initiative in the United States initially
20 funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates
21 Foundation. It allows students to receive a
22 high school diploma and up to two years of
23 college credit by taking a combination of high
24 school and college classes. The primary goal



1 is to increase student access to
2 post-secondary credentials. According to a
3 study completed by the American Institutes for
4 Research, early college students are more
5 likely to graduate from high school, more
6 likely to enroll in college, and more likely
7 to earn college degrees.

8 There are over 300 early college
9 high schools in this country, but there is
10 only one in Delaware. We are unique. We are
11 unique because we offer opportunity. We are
12 unique because we offer a personalized
13 learning environment within the context of
14 project-based learning. We are unique because
15 we offer options. Students can take courses
16 in 41 of the 42 majors offered by Delaware
17 State University. The only exception is
18 aviation, due to the age of our students. We
19 are unique because our students have full
20 access to DSU's accomplished faculty and
21 resources. This provides opportunities for
22 internship and community partnerships not
23 easily found. This relationship is also a
24 direct benefit to the university as it



1 reflects its core values of outreach,
2 community, scholarship, diversity and
3 integrity.

4 Nowhere else in the state can
5 you earn up to 60 credits of college course
6 work while still in high school. Nowhere else
7 in the state can you earn those credits
8 tuition free. The cost of tuition is an
9 in-kind contribution by Delaware State
10 University who made a decision to invest in
11 the future of our students. Nowhere else in
12 the state can you earn those credits without
13 having to sit for a special exam.

14 Do our students test? Are they
15 assessed? Absolutely. They are assessed with
16 the same instruments the other college
17 students are assessed with -- quizzes,
18 projects, presentations and exams.

19 As of the end of the spring 2017
20 semester, our then ninth through eleventh
21 grade students have earned 3,588 credits.
22 With their being 282 students, that's an
23 average of over 12 credits per student. If
24 you consider only the seniors -- the current



1 seniors -- they have earned an average of
2 32 credits before their senior year.

3 The only Early College High
4 School represents a dream and a promise for
5 our community at large, but specifically for
6 parents and students.

7 Today I am wearing multiple
8 hats. I am president of the board of
9 directors for the Early College High School.
10 I am dean for the College of Education, Health
11 and Public Policy at Delaware State
12 University. So I have the opportunity to see
13 firsthand how powerful this relationship is
14 and can be. Third -- and most importantly --
15 I am the parent of a child that attends the
16 Early College High School.

17 My daughter is strong and
18 bright, but academic success has not always
19 come easy for her. She has to study and she
20 has to work hard. She wants to be a doctor,
21 and it was her decision to go to the Early
22 College High School. Her reasoning: "Mommy,
23 if I can get started on my college classes
24 early, then the sooner I can graduate and go



1 on to medical school."

2 It has been exciting to see her
3 come home from school focused on completing
4 the hours -- yes, hours -- of homework, yet
5 committed enough to hear her -- show her own
6 success so that her dad and I don't have to
7 nag and push and nag and push and nag and push
8 some more. She sometimes gets weary, but she
9 never gives up. She is fully supported by her
10 team of teachers without regard to anything
11 besides her wonderful potential. There are no
12 favorites. They see her as who she is -- a
13 young lady who has a desire to excel. We are
14 behind her and they are behind her. And she
15 knows that beyond a shadow of a doubt.

16 I am very proud of the Early
17 College High School at Delaware State
18 University. In three short years, they have
19 accomplished what many thought was impossible.
20 And we have only just begun.

21 Thank you.

22 DR. EDNEY: Good evening.

23 My name is Dr. Evelyn Edney, and
24 I'm the very proud principal at the Early



1 College High School at Delaware State
2 University. We are in our fourth year of
3 serving students from all three counties in
4 the entire State of Delaware.

5 Our basic goal is to take 13-
6 and 14-year-olds and make them college ready
7 within a year or two so that they can be fully
8 enrolled in college courses by the time they
9 are juniors. People may think we are crazy to
10 do this. I can speak for our entire staff
11 when I say this is the hardest job that we've
12 ever had. But I can also say with resounding
13 enthusiasm we would not trade any of it for
14 the world.

15 ECHS students begin their
16 journey in the ninth grade year where they
17 take accelerated high school courses in all
18 core areas. The ninth grade year is for skill
19 building and being aware of the factors that
20 make a student college ready. The ninth
21 graders are in an academy for their first year
22 with teachers whose job it is to set high
23 expectations and to coach them up so that they
24 get the gravity of taking rigorous courses.



1 In their sophomore year, the students continue
2 with their high school courses and focus on
3 choosing a program of study based on 41 of the
4 42 majors that DSU has to offer. By their
5 junior and senior year, the goal is for the
6 students to take anywhere from nine to fifteen
7 college credits each semester. All of these
8 credits are introductory courses that any
9 freshman at DSU can take.

10 ECHS students are treated the
11 same. But in order to do this, we stress the
12 importance of being college ready. There is
13 something so rewarding when a student's ECHS
14 college readiness rubric scores them as being
15 college ready. For the student, it means that
16 they can be on a college campus, sitting in a
17 college classroom next to college students
18 taking college courses with a college
19 curriculum earning college credit. For the
20 teachers, a student being college ready means
21 the work they have been doing with the student
22 is valued and meaningful.

23 There are many ways to earn
24 college credit in the country through



1 International Baccalaureate and Advanced
2 Placement programs, but there is no program
3 like this in the state -- or the region, for
4 that matter. And ECHS students feel special
5 as a result.

6 We are so fortunate to have DSU
7 in our lives. There's something magical that
8 happens when you have a partner who is -- that
9 has a vested interest in the growth of young
10 people. Our students stand behind -- beside
11 scientists and mathematicians and educators
12 and learn from the DSU professors who have
13 some of the greatest minds in the world. We
14 will be fortunate, even if a little bit of
15 that genius rubs off on our students. And DSU
16 allows all of this tuition free.

17 I have begun my 27th year in
18 Delaware public education, and I will be on
19 this earth for 50 years in three more days.
20 And I have never come across an educational
21 experience like the students at ECHS get to
22 experience every day. I am blessed to witness
23 the -- witness this and how it affects these
24 students' lives, their families' lives, their



1 communities and the world as a whole. And I
2 am awestruck that they have earned 3,588
3 credits before any of them have turned 18.
4 They are slated to earn another 900 this
5 semester and on track for over 2,000 for the
6 year just in time to graduate our very first
7 class in May.

8 You can probably tell how happy
9 I am to be part of such a wonderful
10 experience. It puts a smile on my face, and
11 I -- as I awake. And it gives me the reason I
12 get out of bed. We are so very proud of our
13 students and all they have accomplished. We
14 love our Hornets with their Hornet Pride.

15 (Clapping.)

16 Thank you.

17 MS. MC CANTS: Good evening.

18 I'm Nyia McCants. I'm the
19 assistant principal at the Early College High
20 School at Delaware State University.

21 I want to thank you for
22 providing us this opportunity to share
23 information about our school. Beyond what is
24 written in our renewal application, this



1 affords each of us the opportunity to put a
2 face to our submitted written application and
3 share our story.

4 I joined the ECHS family in June
5 2016 after being at a previous traditional
6 public school for eight years and, prior to
7 that, ten years in the alternative education
8 with DSCYF. To be honest, I was not
9 completely sure what I was walking into when I
10 accepted the position to enter into charter
11 world. I did know that I believe in the
12 vision and mission of what ECHS had to offer
13 young people in the State of Delaware.

14 Rewind back several years to
15 when I initially read that my alma mater,
16 Delaware State University, was a partner in
17 chartering a new high school where students
18 can earn up to 60 college credits upon
19 graduation. I thought to myself: I would
20 love to be a part of that school. Fast
21 forward to 2016, and I was presented with the
22 chance to join the team.

23 In my previous schools, there
24 have been challenges that the school community



1 needed to work through, and ECHS is not
2 different as far as overcoming challenges.
3 ECHS is different in the types of challenges
4 we are faced with on a daily basis. We are a
5 small charter school that has to be extremely
6 creative in our resources to provide the best
7 educational experience for our students. All
8 of our staff where a lot of hats, as
9 Dr. Horton mentioned earlier, on any given
10 day. I will say that each of our staff
11 members work tirelessly in what is in the best
12 interest of our students and to prepare them
13 for the next level to take college courses as
14 young as 14 and 15 years old.

15 The power of place is a reality
16 for our students and staff every day on the
17 campus of Delaware State University. The
18 students have a college-going mind-set much
19 sooner than the average high school student.
20 Early College High School at Delaware State
21 University are working together to streamline
22 processes that impact our students -- college
23 registration, teaching spaces, applying for
24 admission to Delaware State University and



1 student accommodations, just to name a few.

2 For most of our staff, the
3 charter renewal experience is a first. We
4 believe in the future possibilities and
5 advancement for our students and staff. The
6 Early College High School staff has the
7 flexibility to be creative and innovative as
8 we impress upon our students to become
9 critical thinkers, college ready, and make our
10 mark on the world.

11 MR. YANCY: Good evening.

12 My name is Timothy Yancy. I am
13 the operations manager and athletic director
14 at Early College High School. I just wanted
15 to take a few moments to express my passion
16 and my -- just love for the Early College High
17 School.

18 Early College High School is a
19 place where students can dream big dreams,
20 whether it's in the classroom or whether it's
21 on the athletic field or court, on the school
22 bus, on the campus of Delaware State, at
23 homecoming, prom or graduation this year.
24 Students at ECHS are dreaming big dreams every



1 day. I believe our teachers, staff and
2 parents all are inspired by being a part of
3 Early College High School and dream big dreams
4 every day as well. It is our passion and
5 desire to encourage and empower and educate
6 these students. That makes us a great place
7 for kids.

8 The opportunity to earn 60
9 college credits is an amazing experience for
10 our Early College High School students. It is
11 a unique mix of being in a high school and
12 being at a college. This is an opportunity of
13 a lifetime. And I'm truly blessed to be a
14 part of this institution and work at the Early
15 College High School.

16 I come from the higher education
17 world. I spent nine years there. And I can
18 truly say that this is the best place that
19 I've enjoyed working with and am truly blessed
20 being with such outstanding individuals.

21 Thank you for your time.

22 MS. GILLIS: Good evening,
23 everyone.

24 My name is Crystal Gillis. I am



1 the PTSA -- parent/teacher/student
2 association -- president. And I'm a proud
3 parent as well.

4 When I -- when my daughter first
5 was going to high school, I thought, hmm,
6 let's look for something different. Then I
7 ran across Early College High School at DSU.
8 And I'm like, whoa, wait a minute. What is
9 this? You can get an associate's degree out
10 of high school? I'm loving this. Let's try
11 it.

12 She's like, "Oh."

13 Come on, Taylor.

14 She said, "Okay. Let's try it."

15 Taylor is a junior and Taylor is
16 loving it. And I too am a proud parent --
17 National Honor Society student mother. You
18 know, I'm the proud parent.

19 The Early College High School is
20 a phenomenal place. The kids do dream big.
21 They can go further. Once they get their
22 associate's degree, they're going to continue
23 their education, because the kids are serious
24 students. So it is a great opportunity. And



1 I'm so proud to have her there. And I'm proud
2 that the school is still here.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. ALLEN: Good evening.

5 My name is Stacy Allen, and I am
6 the vice president of the PTSA at Early
7 College High School.

8 What can I say?

9 To begin, when the opportunity
10 arised (sic) for my daughter to go to high
11 school, I was very apprehensive to send her to
12 this school. We were walking in the mall, and
13 they were having their registration
14 advertisement. They were out trying to tell
15 students about the school.

16 And my daughter is like, "Mom,
17 look at this."

18 And I was just like, hmm, I
19 don't know. You can go to a regular high
20 school.

21 Again, I'm a public school
22 teacher, thinking, well, this is, you know --
23 I teach public school. Nothing happened to
24 me. I went through public school. It's going



1 to be great. You'll be fine. Just -- you
2 know, I just was thinking: Charter? Maybe
3 not. Let's -- you're doing so well in public
4 school. You have so much going on. You're
5 already in so many different activities. You
6 are on the band. Let's just keep on moving
7 forward in that tradition.

8 And she was like, "Mom, I really
9 think this is going to save" -- and, again,
10 this is my -- at that time, a 13-year-old --
11 "this is going to save you money."

12 So once she brought up the
13 money, I was like, okay, let's think about
14 that. And we talked about it. And I let her
15 basically tell me why she would want to
16 attend -- again, that's the teacher side of
17 me. Why do you want to attend this school?
18 And, again, money was a big part.

19 But she was just like, "It's
20 smaller, Mom. And I like the smaller feel of
21 it. I think they're going to pay more
22 attention to me instead of being put in such a
23 big high school. You'll see, Mom. It'll work
24 out fine."



1 And I kept on saying, Nyia, they
2 don't have this. They don't have this. They
3 don't have this.

4 And she's like, "Mom, just give
5 it a chance. Maybe they'll get it." She was
6 very optimistic. And I wasn't being very
7 optimistic.

8 Fast forward. My daughter is a
9 junior now. And they have more than won me
10 over. I mean, I just want to help make them
11 grow even after she graduates. I'm just like,
12 what can I do? What can I do? Because I am
13 so impressed with not just her development,
14 just what I see taking place with all the
15 students there.

16 Again, I am public school at
17 heart. I've been teaching now for 17 years,
18 going on -- this is my 18th year. But the
19 opportunity -- the way that I watch my
20 daughter -- how she was so naive when she
21 entered and how she's so mature. I mean,
22 she's setting my calendar. She's telling me,
23 "No, Mom. This is where you need to be. This
24 is what we have to do. This is what I'm doing



1 right now. And you need to have it aligned.
2 I have a study" -- "I have to make sure I have
3 study hours."

4 And I'm just like, all right,
5 okay. She's more organized than me. And I'm
6 just -- if you knew my child before -- and now
7 it's like, what?

8 I just -- I mean, I don't have a
9 well written speech. I don't have -- all I
10 can do is tell you from the heart it's an
11 amazing transformation that I've seen. Not
12 that she wasn't going to do well any school
13 she went to. It is just how much she has
14 progressed, how much she has matured, and how
15 much she is already envisioning herself and
16 putting herself in situations where she knows
17 she's going to succeed.

18 She's already out there
19 scouting -- I mean, schools. She's contacting
20 colleges for herself, talking to deans at
21 other colleges, telling them about herself and
22 what she has to offer.

23 And I'm like, what? When I was
24 her age, that's not how I approached it at



1 this young age.

2 So I just want to say, first,
3 thank you to all the staff members at the
4 school, because Nyia truly enjoys going to
5 school every day. I don't have to force her.
6 She volunteers for everything. So, yes, my
7 schedule is jam-packed. And she just loves
8 all that you guys do for her. And I just
9 think it's a blessing for Delaware to offer
10 such a unique -- I've lived in other states.
11 And this is the only one that's attached --
12 that I know is attached to a university. And
13 just to be offered that unique chance to do
14 this, I just think it's a wonderful thing.
15 And I think it's an asset to this state.

16 So trust me. I speak about it
17 so much that I have other people in other
18 states talking about, gosh, I wish we had that
19 over here. What? What can -- what?

20 So I just want to say "Thank
21 you." Please sign them up again. I don't
22 know what else to say. Okay?

23 That's all. Thank you.

24 MS. COBB: Hi. My name is



1 Dayna Cobb. I am the PTSA secretary. I am
2 a Del State alum. And I am the proud parent
3 of a sophomore at ECHS.

4 When I first heard about ECHS --
5 my son wasn't able to go yet. He was in
6 middle school. And I was so excited about it.
7 I love my alma mater. Like, I'm a proud
8 Hornet. And so I couldn't wait. And he was
9 apprehensive. And I had to have the buy-in
10 from my child or else it wouldn't work out.
11 And we decided to put our name in the lottery.
12 He was picked.

13 I know everything has said
14 amazing things about this organization -- the
15 school -- and I would agree with all of them.
16 But I think the most important part is hope.

17 I'm a scientist. My husband is
18 technical. And my son is an artsy person.
19 And so, to him, "Maybe not college, Mom. I
20 may not do science. This isn't my thing."
21 And just yesterday -- this is his first
22 college class this semester. And he got
23 pulled to the side by the professor in his
24 first class. And the professor told him he



1 had one of the highest averages in his class.
2 And he called me on his walk to go to lunch.
3 And he was so excited. And he was so happy.
4 And the professor told him, "I hope that
5 you're thinking of coming to Delaware State
6 University." And for the first time I heard
7 my son be excited about college, be excited
8 and have that hope. That is huge. That's
9 what ECHS did for my child. And I hope you
10 continue do that for other people's children.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. JOHNSTON: Hello. My name
13 is Jalen Johnston. I am a proud student here
14 at the Early College High School. I want to
15 thank you for allowing me to give you a taste
16 of the high at Early College High School.

17 The Early College High School is
18 not an ordinary high school. It is an
19 extraordinary high school that gives us a --
20 unlimited opportunities. I currently take a
21 college class called Macroeconomics where it
22 teaches us the principles of economics. We
23 are given assignments, tests and quizzes that
24 are -- that regular college students receive.



1 ECHS has highly-educated
2 teachers to prepare us for our college classes
3 which their teaching pay off at the end of the
4 day. And I thank them for that.

5 Our high school still has the
6 same regular high school jitters, like
7 homecoming, which is this Saturday, as well as
8 activities and our tremendous sports teams,
9 soon to be bringing football to the high. I
10 hope that State of Delaware students from all
11 around can participate in this excellent
12 program. This school gives us unlimited
13 opportunities to prepare us to dream big
14 dreams.

15 MS. GILLIS-HAMMOND: Hello,
16 everybody. My name is Taylor Gillis-Hammond,
17 and I am a junior at the Early College High
18 School. And the two college classes I am
19 currently taking are French -- and I'm taking
20 Intro to Biology.

21 So, at first, I was kind of iffy
22 about the school, but then I was able to talk
23 myself into going there. I was like, okay,
24 well, this is going to help me in the long



1 run. And I know it's going to be good for me.
2 So far so good. And I am so proud to be going
3 here.

4 ECHS courses have prepared me
5 for my college classes. At first, I was like,
6 I don't know if I can handle the stress. I
7 don't know if I can do this. But then some of
8 my teachers, like, during my ninth grade year
9 and tenth grade year, they encouraged me to do
10 more and they encouraged me to better myself.
11 And I am so, like -- I have earned more from
12 this opportunity.

13 Yesterday when I was talking to
14 my French professor, he said, "It's amazing,
15 because I can barely tell you apart from all
16 the college students because you act so mature
17 and you're so prepared for this. You don't
18 have any shyness. And you're just so proud
19 and eager to learn." And he told me that I
20 should keep doing this and keep going forward.
21 And he just encouraged me to keep going.

22 This school has given me many
23 opportunities that I feel as though I would
24 not have at any other school in the State of



1 Delaware.

2 MS. RUGGIERO: Okay. Well, my
3 name is Toni Marie Ruggiero. I'm currently an
4 eleventh grader at ECHS.

5 And I came to the school in the
6 middle of last year. And I was -- at first I
7 was kind of apprehensive about it. But, then,
8 there was also a part of me that was eager to
9 come, because I just moved to Delaware from
10 Arizona. And it was a completely different
11 experience.

12 So I decided -- I talked with my
13 mother. And, like, I'm going to try it. So
14 at first, like, I loved the experience. And I
15 still do. The -- they really prepared -- they
16 really helped me prepare to become more of a
17 mature young adult than I ever could imagine.

18 My last school, they -- I have a
19 very -- I have the type of mind-set that I
20 want to keep going. I want to motivate
21 myself. I want to do -- start to do as --
22 just as best as I could. And that -- I wasn't
23 getting that from my old school. And I can
24 definitely say I'm getting that from here.



1 I'm currently taking three
2 college courses. And I haven't even been here
3 a whole year yet, which is crazy to me.

4 And I can say the teachers are
5 phenomenal. Like, they make me want to pull
6 my hair out sometimes by all the work. But
7 you know what? I couldn't ask for any other
8 teachers because they really help prepare me
9 for an amazing experience that I couldn't get
10 anywhere else.

11 And I was told last week by my
12 professor -- like, my professor was so
13 surprised that I was in high school that he
14 yelled it out in the whole class. He's like,
15 "You're a high school student?"

16 I'm like, "Yeah, I am."

17 And -- because, like, he
18 couldn't tell because I just blended in with
19 the college class so well.

20 And I just -- this is just an
21 amazing experience. Like -- and I never
22 thought I would be able to get this
23 opportunity. And I prepare myself, like, even
24 before, like, seniors prepare themselves,



1 like -- and, like, my -- I'm doing something
2 that my whole family is, like, shocked. Even,
3 like, my friends from Arizona are saying, oh,
4 that's crazy. Like, you're taking -- you're a
5 full college student? That's crazy.

6 I'm like, yeah.

7 And it's just an amazing
8 opportunity. I love the staff. I love -- and
9 I try to do as much as I can within the
10 school. I'm in National Honor Society. I'm
11 at the top of -- one of the top of my classes.
12 I'm trying to do sports and stuff like that.
13 So -- what? Oh, okay.

14 So, I mean, overall it's just an
15 amazing opportunity for kids all over to
16 become the mature adult that everyone expects
17 them to be.

18 MS. LEWIS: All right. Hello,
19 everyone. My name is Giselle Lewis, and I am
20 currently a senior at the Early College High
21 School.

22 So today you've heard a lot of
23 great things about the school and, like, a lot
24 of, like, factual things. I'm going to give



1 you guys my personal experience at the school
2 and how it's helped me.

3 So currently I am taking -- I
4 have over 43 credits, I believe. I came in
5 here my sophomore year, actually, and just --
6 I can see myself how I've matured and how I've
7 been more dependent on myself rather than
8 depending on, you know, my teacher. I mean, I
9 can depend on my teacher.

10 But, you know, growing up as a
11 responsible adult, going into the college
12 class, at first was a little intimidating,
13 because I didn't know what to expect. You
14 know, it was a new experience. I'm a college
15 student. I'm like, oh, my gosh. Are they
16 going to tell I'm a high school student? I
17 don't know.

18 But being able to be as
19 successful as the college students that go
20 there is amazing. And also just being able to
21 balance high school and college together -- I
22 mean, high school and college together --
23 like, I'm in student council -- president of
24 student council for the class of 2018,



1 National Honor Society. And it's just amazing
2 that I can get a taste of both.

3 I would love to see this school
4 continue and prosper. My sister actually goes
5 to the Early College High School as well.
6 She's a junior. Her name is Talia. And just
7 to see how she has flourished and how she's,
8 like, become more open and -- you know, she
9 loves school. She used to hate school.

10 I used to not really be too fond
11 of school, but I get excited. Because I'm
12 looking at my future, not just thinking about
13 now. I'm thinking about where am I going to
14 be a couple years from now. It has just
15 helped me open doors. I have connections.
16 The university gives me connections to other
17 colleges, internships, like, honestly. And
18 when colleges review my transcript, they'll
19 say, wow, she's already taken college credit.
20 Like, it just stands out to them. When they
21 submit their college applications, it's like,
22 wow, she went to an Early College High School.
23 Like, it's amazing. And I just think it's a
24 great experience for all the students.



1 And I love to see -- like, my
2 heart goes out for others just to see, like,
3 the ninth, tenth, eleventh and seniors -- just
4 seeing the process of them growing into
5 mature, independent, like, adult college
6 students is amazing. And I want the best for
7 all of the grades. And for the ones more to
8 come. So it would be great just to -- when I
9 graduate -- even then, when I'm not going to
10 the school anymore, just to see how the school
11 grows. So it will be amazing.

12 So yeah.

13 I ended on an awkward note.
14 Sorry. But yeah.

15 MS. GILDON: Good evening.

16 My name is Sara Gildon. I have
17 the distinct honor and privilege of teaching
18 ninth grade personal finance and tenth grade
19 economics at the Early College High School at
20 Delaware State University. I'm also the
21 advisor for National Honor Society, and I'm
22 the 2017 Teacher of the Year.

23 Now, with that being said, Early
24 College High School is all about



1 transformation. We take ninth graders -- or,
2 rather, eighth graders plus three months. And
3 our job is to take and mold them into the
4 ideal college student. This is no easy task.
5 It starts from day one their freshman year.
6 And we start our process with our
7 individualized and personalized growth plans
8 that every student completes in their freshman
9 year and updates through their senior year.

10 With that, they start looking at
11 what it means to be a college student, what it
12 means to be college ready. Our students in
13 the ninth grade have already gotten their
14 first taste of a college readiness score which
15 is based on our college readiness rubric.

16 There were cheers and there were tears -- lots
17 of tears -- because they're just not there.

18 And it would be a crime for us to not take the
19 time to help these students find their way and
20 understanding the idea that every one of our
21 students must choose their own path, must
22 follow a given path, and are going to be
23 college ready at different times and to assure
24 them that that is okay.



1 So we start that first week of
2 ninth grade looking at these plans. And we're
3 looking at what skills they need to improve,
4 what skills they are really strong at. We
5 examine the habits of mind so that they can
6 start building their profiles or their plans
7 forward.

8 Our students have to start
9 thinking college mind-set early because they
10 have to declare their major by the end of
11 their tenth grade year. I was nervous and
12 changed my major a few times in college, let
13 alone in high school.

14 So, with that, they go through
15 and they watch their scores. And it's almost
16 like Christmas morning when they get those
17 reports. Just having to see if they grew or
18 seeing if they're college ready. And then we
19 celebrated. You're college ready. We have a
20 celebration. You improved three points on
21 your college readiness rubric. That deserves
22 a celebration too.

23 Understanding that with this
24 plan and with the rubric, our kids might not



1 take the same amount of college classes as
2 other students. They might only be able to
3 handle one college class their tenth grade
4 year. Or maybe they needed to wait till their
5 junior year. But the key here is that our
6 size and our structure allow us the
7 opportunity to help every student be
8 successful at the pace that they can reach
9 those academic goals and to know that it's
10 okay that if we have some kids their junior
11 year that aren't in all but one college class
12 and that you support those students so they
13 are successful at no matter what academic
14 level they're achieving at, high school or
15 collegiate.

16 I thank you for your time.

17 DR. FOX-LYKENS: Good evening.

18 My name is Dr. Fox-Lykens. I am
19 a former founding school board member of this
20 Early College High School. I'm the former
21 director of the Center for Teaching and
22 Learning at Delaware State University.

23 I would just like to voice my
24 opinion and ask that the state take a very



1 serious look at the governance of the high
2 school. Charter schools are under corporate
3 law. However, in this case, there is a sole
4 incorporator -- one person making the decision
5 as to who will serve on the board and who will
6 not serve on the board. That person is the
7 university president. That could be a
8 conflict of interest.

9 Furthermore, the majority of the
10 board is made up of people with a vested
11 interest in Delaware State University.
12 Primarily, Delaware State University signs
13 their paycheck.

14 As the secretary of the board, I
15 went to FOIA training. I attended Delaware
16 Department of Justice FOIA training. There
17 were many times that I saw, out of
18 convenience, board members having
19 conversations in the hallways of the
20 university that should not be taking place.
21 That's a FOIA violation. Two or three board
22 members discussing board business because its
23 convenient because we work together is a FOIA
24 violation.



1 I found myself constantly
2 battling with a board of trustee member. The
3 board of trustees for the university operates
4 very differently than a public school board.
5 They are not under FOIA regulations. They do
6 not have to disclose things.

7 I'm a 25-year educator, all in
8 public schools -- K-12 and postsecondary. I
9 know how school boards should run. I know
10 they're accountable to the public. And to be
11 constantly fighting FOIA violations is
12 unnecessary.

13 The reason that was happening is
14 because of the makeup of the board. I cannot,
15 as an employee of Delaware State University
16 and secretary of the board, go up against one
17 of the board of trustees on this board who
18 actually -- my job is contingent upon that
19 board member liking me or not liking me.

20 So I ask the state: Please look
21 at the governance structure in the event that
22 there is a conflict between this high school
23 and the university. Because of the way the
24 governance is set up, the university is going



1 to win. That is a detriment to the taxpayers
2 of this state.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. EDNEY: Let's end on a happy
5 note.

6 MS. SAVAGE: Good evening,
7 everyone.

8 My name is Dara Laws-Savage, and
9 I come to the Early College High School with
10 23 years of educational experience in the
11 State of Delaware. I am a former AP English
12 12 teacher. I am a former E-110 teacher from
13 the University of Delaware. And I can tell
14 you that there is no place in this world I
15 would rather teach.

16 I left my district of 13 years
17 to come work under Evelyn Edney and her
18 leadership. This school is based on the power
19 of place. We have students who completely
20 transform themselves just by being in the
21 right place at the right time.

22 If you have a student who is on
23 a college campus and they're with students who
24 are already academically and



1 collegiately-minded, they're going to become
2 that. That is the power of place.

3 There's a proverb that says
4 "Iron sharpens iron." And when these students
5 are around students who aspire to be great,
6 they aspire to be great.

7 You've heard the numbers -- the
8 number of college credits that they have
9 earned. But to see these babies -- because
10 that's what they are when we get them --
11 transform themselves and to be able to speak
12 in front of adults without blinking, to be
13 able to hold their own in a college class, and
14 to be able to be asked by a college student to
15 tutor them, we've done our job.

16 There's no other school in the
17 State of Delaware that can do what the Early
18 College High School does. I've been there.
19 I've been their AP teacher with the test.
20 It's not the same. I have taught E-110 in a
21 high school classroom. It is not the same.
22 Power of place makes a difference. And we are
23 the only ones who do it the way we do it.

24 Hornet Pride is -- sorry -- it's



1 a rule. Hornet Pride is something that these
2 students embody. And even when they are out,
3 that Hornet Pride shows through. They tell
4 their friends, "I'm on campus." And just to
5 hear them say it -- "I'm on campus. I've got
6 to catch the shuttle. I'm on campus." It's
7 so powerful for them to be in that place,
8 doing what they do, and excelling more than
9 any of their friends who are in a traditional
10 high school. It is absolutely the best school
11 in the State of Delaware. I would not work
12 anywhere else.

13 And if you have any questions,
14 concerns, our doors are open. Come see us.
15 Come see our kids in action. This is just a
16 taste. This is just the tip of the iceberg.
17 The Early College High School at Delaware
18 State University is going to be a leader in
19 education in the State of Delaware. Once you
20 sign that paper and we keep going, watch what
21 we do.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 MS. STOUFFER: Is there anyone
24 else who desires to speak?



1 Okay. If not, I want to
2 thank -- would you like to speak?

3 DR. HORTON: Yeah. As a final,
4 summarizing comment.

5 MS. STOUFFER: Okay.

6 DR. HORTON: You've had the
7 opportunity today to hear from a variety of
8 constituents. You've heard from our parents.
9 You've heard from our teachers. You've heard
10 from our wonderful students. You've even
11 heard from a former board member.

12 What I would like to say is we
13 are unique. I said that before. We have a
14 unique relationship with Delaware State
15 University. We have a unique relationship
16 with the community. We have unique
17 relationships with our students.

18 The value of that is
19 immeasurable. Sometimes it can be
20 uncomfortable, but it is wonderful. It is
21 powerful and it's impactful.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 MS. STOUFFER: Anyone else?

24 All right. If not, I want to



1 thank you all for participating today. The
2 Secretary will consider your comments in
3 deciding at the conclusion of the renewal
4 process what decision to submit to the State
5 Board for assent, if needed.

6 This hearing is now closed.

7 (The hearing adjourned at
8 6:00 p.m. this same evening.)

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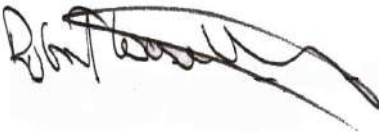
STATE OF DELAWARE:

:

KENT COUNTY :

I, Robert Wayne Wilcox, Jr., a Registered Professional Reporter, within and for the County and State aforesaid, do hereby certify that the foregoing hearing was taken before me, pursuant to notice, at the time and place indicated; that said witness was by me duly sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; that the testimony of said witness was correctly recorded in machine shorthand by me and thereafter transcribed under my supervision with computer-aided transcription; that the foregoing hearing is a true record of the testimony given by the witness; and that I am neither of counsel nor kin to any party in said action, nor interested in the outcome thereof.

WITNESS my hand and official seal this
10th day of Oct



Robert Wayne Wilcox, Jr., RPR



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