

IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**

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OKLAHOMA STATEWIDE  
CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD, *et al.*,  
*Petitioners,*

*v.*

GENTNER DRUMMOND, ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OF OKLAHOMA, *ex rel.* OKLAHOMA,  
*Respondent.*

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ST. ISIDORE OF  
SEVILLE CATHOLIC VIRTUAL SCHOOL,  
*Petitioner,*

*v.*

GENTNER DRUMMOND, ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OF OKLAHOMA, *ex rel.* OKLAHOMA,  
*Respondent.*

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ON WRITS OF CERTIORARI TO THE  
SUPREME COURT OF OKLAHOMA

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**AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF OF  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PARENTS,  
PARENT ORGANIZATIONS, AND ADVOCATES  
IN SUPPORT OF RESPONDENT**

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**INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE*\***

*Amici curiae* are public charter school parents, parent organizations, and advocates. The *Amici* Parents, introduced individually in the next section, chose to send their children to public charter schools across seven states—California, Colorado, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Washington, and West Virginia. The *Amici* Parents thus have an interest in the continued availability of public charter schools as part of public education systems. The Charter Schools Action Fund advocates on behalf of public charter schools to protect “the future of our students by securing public school options that can provide the high-quality education they need.” Charter Schools Action Fund, <https://bit.ly/43AbOR1> (last visited Mar. 31, 2025). And the parent organizations—Nashville PROPEL, Memphis Lift, and Parent Shield Fort Worth—represent the interests of thousands of parents whose children attend public charter schools and whose stories are similar to those shared by the *Amici* Parents. Nashville PROPEL advocates for school choice and access to high-quality academic opportunities. Nashville PROPEL, <https://bit.ly/3DPDF1W> (last visited Apr. 2, 2025). Memphis Lift fights “to break the cycle of limited educational opportunities to open doors for our kids to have the promise of a better future.” *Our Mission*, Memphis Lift, <https://bit.ly/4cmuSVo> (last visited Apr. 2, 2025). Parent Shield Fort Worth strives “to educate and unite powerful parents to demand a high-quality education for all children.”

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\* No counsel for any party in this case authored any part of this brief, and no person except *amici* contributed to the costs of its preparation. See S. Ct. R. 37.6. All statements made by the *Amici* Parents are on file with counsel.

*About*, Parent Shield Fort Worth, <https://bit.ly/4iS0LY9> (last visited Apr. 2, 2025) (cleaned up). The *Amici* Parents, the Fund, and the parent organizations further believe that public school choice is important because it allows parents to choose free and open schools best suited to serve the needs of their children. For these reasons, they write in support of Respondent and urge this Court to affirm.

### INTRODUCTION TO *AMICI* PARENTS

**Eshia Allen** is a self-described Air Force brat and the mother of two children who have attended BelovED Community Charter School in Jersey City, New Jersey, since kindergarten. Her daughter is a high school junior and an accomplished cookie saleswoman for her Girl Scout Troop who excels in advanced placement and honors courses. Her daughter is also fluent in French, Spanish, and Arabic and puts her Arabic skills to use as a lifeguard in a nearby Arabic-speaking community. Eshia's eighth-grade son has an equally impressive resume. Not only is he an avid comic book creator and musician who makes theme music for his original characters, but he is also a four-time Junior Olympian and state champion long jumper.

**Lina Burgos** is the mother of two “totally different” middle school boys who attend Hatikvah International Academy, a Hebrew language immersion school in East Brunswick, New Jersey. When Lina's not cheering for her oldest son at basketball games or helping her youngest son prepare for his upcoming performance in Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights*, Lina volunteers with the New Jersey Public Charter School Association and manages a local athletic association.

**Lindsay Cordell** is a mother of four, a piano teacher, and the co-lead pastor at Bridge Community Church in Ranson, West Virginia. Her eleven-year-old son attends Eastern Panhandle Preparatory Academy in Kearneysville, West Virginia. EPPA is one of the first three public charter schools opened in West Virginia, and its curriculum prepares students for college and career readiness with small classes, technology, and project-based learning.

**Kat Dewalt** is an administrator in the organic grocery industry, and her eighth-grade daughter attends Discovery Charter School in Durham, North Carolina. Discovery welcomes students in sixth through eleventh grades and provides them with a STEAM-centric curriculum. Prior to attending Discovery, Kat's daughter attended Kestrel Heights Charter School, a small, diverse, and inclusive K–8 charter school in Durham.

**Yolanda Fontenot** is an active public charter school advocate from Tacoma, Washington. Not only does she advocate for public charter schools by engaging with the state legislature, but she also runs social media sites for the public charter and traditional public schools her sons attend. Yolanda's oldest son is a senior on his way to graduating from Summit Olympus this year. He wants to pursue a career in art and design and has been accepted to several schools, including Washington State University, University of Washington, and Evergreen State College.

**Keith Guzik** is a professor and the chair of the Sociology Department at the University of Colorado, but he is, first and foremost, a trilingual father who firmly believes “a translated text just isn't as good as

the original.” After the Ukraine War halted his research sabbatical in Russia, he returned to the United States and enrolled his two sons in Global Village Academy, a public charter school that immerses students in Russian, Spanish, French, and Mandarin Chinese and is located in Denver, Colorado. Keith chose Global Village to preserve the language acquisition his sons developed while living abroad in Moscow.

**Raquel Maden** is a mother of two, Cubmaster to dozens, and past school board representative for thousands. After nearly a decade of shaping public education locally in San Ysidro, California, Raquel joined the California School Boards Association to direct school board training statewide. Raquel’s oldest son attends Altus South Bay, in San Diego, California. Altus South Bay provides personalized, one-on-one instruction for his dysgraphia—a neurological disorder and learning disability that impacts his ability to write.

**Susanna Pasillas** is a first-grade teacher at University Prep Charter School in Denver, Colorado, where her oldest daughter is a fifth-grade student. University Prep challenges students with rigorous academics intended to “prepare every child for a four-year college degree and a life of opportunity.”

**Andrea Simon** is the mother of a public charter school graduate and two public charter school students of Aspire Public Schools in Stockton, California. Andrea’s oldest son attended APEX Academy and graduated from Langston Hughes Academy. He is now enrolled at San Joaquin Delta College, where he studies radiation technology. Andrea’s middle son is interested in accounting—like his

mother—and attends Benjamin Holt Middle School. And her youngest son, who loves cooking and is interested in becoming a chef, attends Vincent Shalvey Academy.

**Darcelina Soloria** is the Regional Director of Advocacy (Eastern Washington) for the Washington State Charter Schools Association and a founding parent at Spokane International Academy. Spokane International is, as its name suggests, an internationally focused charter school that “empowers its students with the academic skills, habits of mind and global competence necessary to complete advanced courses in high school and a college degree in order to become leaders who can powerfully transform our communities.” Darcelina’s two children are in the ninth and seventh grades at Spokane International.

**Lanee Williams** and her son hail from Cleveland, Ohio, where both are engaged in educational pursuits. Lanee, a social worker, is working on her master’s degree, and her son is a fourth grader at Breakthrough Public Schools. Lanee’s son also plays flag football and basketball. He wants to one day attend Cleveland State University—like his mother—and hopes to work in law enforcement.

## SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

The *Amici* Parents, the Fund, and the parent organizations write to emphasize the importance of public school choice, as illustrated by the stories of the *Amici* Parents. While there are many reasons parents choose to send their children to public charter schools, five of those reasons stand out. *First*, public charter schools adapt to help students with special needs succeed. *Second*, public charter schools provide parents with an additional

public school option. *Third*, public charter schools offer unique opportunities and programs. *Fourth*, public charter schools provide a safe space where students can learn and thrive. *Fifth*, public charter schools share a commitment to excellence that drives student success in their communities. This Court should, therefore, affirm and preserve public charter schools as an important part of public education systems across the country.

## ARGUMENT

Parenting is a series of important choices. With one-sixth of a child's waking hours spent in school by their senior year, among the most important of those choices is where a parent sends their child to learn. *How Do Children Spend Their Time? Time Use and Skill Development in the PSID*, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, <https://bit.ly/447n6fJ> (May 26, 2020). The *Amici* Parents chose to send their children to public charter schools for a variety of reasons. For some, public charter schools better addressed their child's special needs or provided a safe space to learn. For others, traditional public schools were simply not the right fit for their child, and they were attracted to unique programs and traditions of excellence at public charter schools. In public charter schools, all the *Amici* Parents found free, open-to-all places for their children to learn and flourish.

### **1. Public charter schools adapt to help students with special needs succeed.**

Because public charter schools operate autonomously instead of through a public school district, they can tailor courses and policies to help children who may

have difficulty learning in a traditional public school. As explained by many parents, including Kat Dewalt, Eshia Allen, and Raquel Maden, the resources that public charter schools provide make all the difference for their children.

*Discovery Charter School (N.C.).* Kat Dewalt’s daughter was identified as a student with special needs during a pre-kindergarten screening for her traditional public school. Although her daughter did not have a cognitive disability, Kat’s daughter was provided an IEP and placed in a separate setting for children with cognitive disabilities. See U.S. Dep’t Educ., *IDEA Topic Areas*, <https://bit.ly/3FHZcNQ> (explaining that “the cornerstone of the IDEA is the entitlement of each eligible child with a disability to a free appropriate public education,” and “an IEP is the primary vehicle” for doing so). Despite repeated pleas to reassess the IEP and place Kat’s daughter in a general educational setting, the school refused.

Kat then moved her daughter—who was diagnosed with developmental delay and a severe speech disorder—to Kestrel Heights, a charter school in Durham. Kat recalls walking out of her first IEP meeting at Kestrel Heights “crying tears of joy” because she finally felt heard. After attending Kestrel Heights, Kat’s daughter began eighth grade at Discovery, where her daughter has continued to flourish. At Discovery, her daughter remains in the general educational setting, but she also receives additional support. Special education teachers provide help in the general educational setting, which helps avoid the stigma of having to go to another setting because of special needs. Discovery also offers support in a separate, smaller setting when needed. For Kat’s

daughter, that consists of math and reading and twice-weekly speech therapy. Kat's daughter has progressed "leaps and bounds" at Kestrel and Discovery compared to her prior school.

*BelovED Community Charter School (N.J.).* Eshia Allen also saw one of her children flourish thanks to a public charter school. Eshia's son is on the autism spectrum, and when COVID and family tragedy struck at the same time, her son struggled with the rigorous academics at BelovED. He had been an honor student, but Eshia knew his grades were starting to fall before another report card came home. She considered moving her son to another school, as she had seen other families make the same choice under similar circumstances. BelovED responded not by lowering expectations, but by providing the support and resources Eshia's son needed to meet the school's high expectations. Her son rose to the challenge, and his grade point average followed.

Eshia's son is now preparing to enter high school, which presents a new set of challenges for him to face. To help him and other students who need a little extra assistance in making that transition, BelovED has an educator whose sole purpose is to provide that assistance. Eshia said that this educator helps ensure that students keep up with their homework and remain on track to advance to high school. This educator serves as an advocate for the students and provides parents with an accurate picture of their student's progress. Eshia said that for her son, this educator has "made a world of difference" and is helping her son "excel in ways I couldn't imagine, but I had hoped for."

*Altus South Bay & Dimensions Collaborative (Calif).* Raquel Maden’s oldest son has ADHD, severe anxiety, and dysgraphia—a neurological disorder and learning disability that impacts his ability to write. At his traditional public school, her son had IEP meetings once a year. That wasn’t enough support. Raquel’s son needed individual attention. Raquel realized that “no matter how well intentioned,” her son’s traditional public school simply didn’t have the resources to address her son’s needs. She turned to public charter schools for a solution.

Dimensions Collaborative and Altus South Bay have been the solution. Raquel’s son now has several IEP meetings a year coupled with frequent mental health check-ins. Teachers tackle his special needs “head on,” and they do so “creatively” by integrating innovative teaching methods into everyday instruction. Raquel now “feels like a partner” in her son’s education. She works directly with teachers to evaluate her son’s “one-on-one needs,” make “curriculum decisions,” and “troubleshoot together” early and often.

Public charter schools even answered Raquel’s call for help when COVID shut down her youngest son’s traditional public school. When Raquel asked an educator at Dimensions Collaborative for help with at-home instruction for her kindergartener, the school offered advice and supplemental lessons, which made Raquel feel as if her children “had no limits” to what they could achieve with their public education.

Several parents expressed how much public charter schools helped their students with special needs succeed. For example, Lina Burgos’s son, who has a social disorder,

saw his grades dramatically improve because of Hatikvah International Academy’s attentiveness, use of new teaching methods, small class sizes, and proactive efforts with respect to his IEP. Andrea Simon shared that when her oldest son was diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome, his school went into action, developing a 504 plan, an IEP, making helpful seating arrangements, and working with his parents to identify related behaviors. *See* U.S. Dep’t Educ., *Section 504*, <https://bit.ly/4i0N1JC> (“Section 504 helps ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities.”) (last visited Mar. 27, 2025). Her youngest son also received additional resources to help him overcome speech issues, including a stutter, which have helped him “come a long way” and alleviated the frustration he used to feel because others could not understand him.

Lanee Williams also found resources her son needed at a public charter school. At his prior traditional public school, Lanee’s son—who has ADHD—was frequently getting into trouble, and the solution was to remove him from the classroom. And removing him from the classroom meant having him spend most of the day with the school’s janitor. In Lanee’s words, “he was being pushed off” and the janitor “was the only help he had.” So for Lanee, part of the reason for enrolling her son at Breakthrough Midtown was “to ensure he had a fighting chance.” Lanee and her son’s teachers now work together to help her son succeed and control his impulses: “They understand my goals and we share goals. And we’ve seen a drastic difference in the awareness of [her son’s] needs.”

## **2. Public charter schools provide parents with an additional public school option.**

From coast to coast, public charter schools give parents another option when deciding where to send their children to school. For some, private schools are not an option due to cost or the lack of private schools near home. Homeschooling may not be an option because of a parent's time constraints or other demands. Public charter schools thus offer a reliable, cost-free option for parents seeking other educational opportunities that better suit their child's needs, as explained by Lindsay Cordell and Lane Williams.

*Eastern Panhandle Preparatory Academy (W. Va.).* As a native of North Carolina, Lindsay Cordell was familiar with the vibrant, thriving public charter school community around Charlotte. After moving to West Virginia, Lindsay began looking for alternatives to local traditional public schools for her four children. While she now homeschools three of her children, she chose EPPA for her youngest son. And when it opened in 2022, EPPA was “an answer to a prayer.”

Lindsay was drawn to EPPA's small class sizes and individualized attention. But she also appreciates that at EPPA, her son is more than just a label. Lindsay adopted her youngest son when he was sixteen-months old. He had been neglected, leading to attachment issues and a reactive attachment disorder diagnosis. Lindsay's son has difficulty bonding and feeling safe, but EPPA joined in the efforts to provide support for her son, who has made significant progress in his time there. At EPPA, everyone “sees the students first, not their struggles.”

Lindsay added that “children are unique in their needs and learning styles, so it only makes sense to give families another option if traditional public schools, homeschooling, or private schools are not a good fit. My hope is that we can cheer one another on instead of competing against each other.”

*Breakthrough Public Schools (Ohio).* Unlike Lindsay, Lane Williams first sent her son to a traditional public school, but like Lindsay, Lane found public charter schools provided an environment she preferred. There were two major reasons for that. For one, her son’s traditional public school lacked diversity. One day, Lane noticed that her son was one of only a few students who were racially diverse and that there was little diversity among staff members. After hearing about Breakthrough, Lane started researching the school, and she found that the school had “more kids who look like him, and more staff who looks like him,” which was important to Lane.

Even more, Lane wanted her son to attend a school where she could be more involved. When Lane tried to go to her son’s traditional public school to discuss behavioral issues and hurdles her son faced, the doors of the school were closed to her, so she could not advocate for her son. To Lane, being engaged with and active at her son’s school is tremendously important. She was unable to do that at her son’s traditional public school. Breakthrough, however, “allows me to be an active parent.” Lane said that the teachers make great efforts to navigate issues with parents and are very accessible. She added that the dean of Breakthrough is available to discuss academic and behavioral issues with parents. But some of the most enjoyable opportunities are the special events—like

Pastries with Parents and Muffins with Mom—that allow Lanee to visit her son in a school environment where he is thriving.

Lindsay and Lanee are not alone. Several other parents shared about the impact and importance of educational options. When considering a school for her daughter, Susanna Pasillas was grateful to have the choice of University Prep Charter School. Susanna considered traditional public schools, but the ones nearby were not high-performing schools, and she could not afford private school. Charter school filled that gap for her—and as an added bonus, was racially diverse.

Darcelina Soloria was faced with a difficult choice when her older son was about to enter kindergarten. Traditional public schools in the area were not the best option; she was worried about larger classes and racism that her half-Filipino son might face. And private schools were cost prohibitive and lacked diversity. When her son began kindergarten, she was delighted to have the choice of Spokane International Academy, a new public charter school.

As a school board member, Raquel Maden had a front row seat to educational gaps in traditional public schools. Prior to having her own children, Raquel “hadn’t given charter schools a chance at all.” But when her oldest son was diagnosed with dysgraphia, she learned that “no matter how well intentioned,” her son’s traditional public school simply didn’t have the resources necessary to address his needs. Raquel turned to Altus South Bay and quickly learned that charter and district schools are “not an us-versus-you thing,” but a “partnership” that can make

public education whole. Raquel believes traditional public schools “still work for some kids, just not all of them.” And for children who don’t fit into that box, they can still be successful and happy when parents have more choices.

### **3. Public charter schools offer unique opportunities and programs.**

At public charter schools, educators can develop courses, schedules, and teaching methods that meet the unique needs of their students. Public charter schools are thus laboratories for educational experimentation able to offer opportunities not available at traditional public schools, as explained by Darcelina Soloria, Lina Burgos, and Keith Guzik.

*Spokane International Academy (Wash.).* Spokane International has a traditional curriculum but is “internationally focused and globally minded,” which attracted Darcelina Soloria. Beginning in kindergarten, students spend each school year learning about the history, culture, and food of a different region of the world. Students attend Spanish immersion classes from kindergarten on, culminating in an eighth-grade field trip to a Spanish-speaking country to both experience the culture and “give back” through community service. Darcelina’s oldest son—who was in the school’s first class of kindergarteners and is now a ninth grader—traveled to Peru for ten days for his capstone Spanish immersion trip last year.

Spokane International also has a two-path program that begins in eleventh grade and is designed to prepare students for life after high school. Students who choose

the college pathway, or Running Start, can “enroll in a full schedule of college-level courses at either the Community College of Spokane or Eastern Washington University.” *High School*, Spokane Int’l Academy, <https://bit.ly/41Vc9N3> (last visited Mar. 31, 2025). Students who complete the pathway leave high school not only with a diploma, but also an associate of arts degree or two years of college credits. *Id.* Students can also choose the career pathway, or NEWTech, and spend half of the school day learning vocation skills. *Id.* Students who complete that pathway will leave school with a diploma and training or certification “in a trade to prepare them for post-secondary life.” *Id.*

*Global Village Academy (Colo.)*. Keith Guzik chose Global Village because of its unique language immersion program offering Russian, Spanish, French, and Mandarin Chinese. In addition to language immersion, the school allows students to explore other cultures and learn more about the people who speak the languages they are learning. The students also celebrate those cultures during an annual festival that highlights their food, music, and history. Through those immersive experiences, Global Village prepares students to live and work in a global community and helps them develop cross-cultural knowledge from their peers, teachers, parents, and wider community, no matter their chosen second language.

For Keith’s sons in particular, Global Village has provided a way to preserve and improve their Russian, which they were learning while their father was on a research sabbatical. His sons—like other students—also use learning techniques unique to the language they are studying. Keith’s sons, for example, have benefitted

from learning Russian math techniques, participating in Russian spelling bees, and competing annually in the National Olympiada of Russian Language—a national competition where middle and high school students demonstrate their language skills and receive recognition for their proficiency.

*Hatikvah International Academy (N.J.).* When Lina Burgos went searching for other public-school options after her son was attacked by another student, she initially had reservations about Hatikvah’s Hebrew language immersion curriculum. Lina comes from a Catholic family, and her youngest son will celebrate his first communion this year, so she worried that Hatikvah’s emphasis on Hebrew meant it employed a faith-based curriculum like many private schools tied to a particular religion. But that was not the case, as Lina learned that Hatikvah is not a religious school.

Lina admires the school’s thoughtful design of extracurricular activities so that children from all cultures, religions, and ethnicities are able to exist within one community while maintaining their individual identities. For example, at Hatikvah, in addition to celebrating their own faith-based holidays, students also celebrate a general day of giving together, regardless of faith or religious background.

Spokane International, Global Village, and Hatikvah are not the only schools employing innovative programs. In Durham, North Carolina, Discovery Charter School creates personalized occupation-based courses of study for its students. Currently, the school is designing a personalized course of study for Kat Dewalt’s daughter,

who wants to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. And in Tacoma, Washington, Yolanda Fontenot's son and his peers can take two-week-long expedition courses that Yolanda described as "baby internships." The expeditions include courses on music, cooking, farming, skateboarding, and financial literacy taught by members of the local community and introduce students to new skills and potential careers.

**4. Public charter schools provide a safe space where students can learn and thrive.**

For some students, public charter schools provide a refuge from bullying they experienced at previous schools. Some public charter schools do more than provide an escape, making their halls and classrooms safer spaces for all students. And by doing so, those public charter schools rebuild self-confidence and self-esteem. As explained by Yolanda Fontenot and Andrea Simon, the safe space their children found in public charter schools has changed their lives for the better.

*Summit Olympus (Wash.).* Yolanda Fontenot's son had suffered from bullying since kindergarten. Over the years, other students pelted him with school supplies. They mocked him because he didn't dress cool and because he had messy hair. When he was attacked by four other students, Yolanda's son was the one who was suspended because he pushed one of his assailants. Her son's mental health deteriorated, and he truly believed that no one loved him.

And then Yolanda reached her breaking point. One morning, her son begged her to let him stay home from school, for a brief break from the bullies he had to face day after day. His self-esteem was so depleted that Yolanda

feared she would leave for work and come home to find her son no longer alive. Yolanda made her son promise he wouldn't harm himself, promise he'd be home when she returned from work. Despite his promises, that was the longest day of Yolanda's life. She was determined that neither she nor her son would continue to suffer.

After searching, Yolanda and her son found Summit Olympus, and the change was immediate and lasting. When Yolanda picked up her son from orientation, he was smiling. Every day, he was up, ready, and excited for school. Yolanda watched her son make friends, find a girlfriend, and express himself creatively. "I was seeing my baby come alive," Yolanda said. He was telling his younger siblings that they shouldn't care what others think about them, and he was telling his fellow students how excited he was for his future, how he never thought "he'd be here and feel this way." For Yolanda, "the charter school gave me back the baby I left at kindergarten. The boy that loved to dance and say, 'I love you, mama.'"

*Aspire Public Schools (Calif.)*. Andrea Simon shared a similar story. Although her oldest son had loved preschool, something changed when he started kindergarten. Her little boy was becoming angry and aggressive at school. Confused, Andrea met with teachers, administrators, and the principal at her son's school. Nothing helped, so Andrea began looking for options outside traditional public schools, and she eventually enrolled her son at Aspire's APEX Academy.

Before her son started at his new school, Andrea learned that her son had been the victim of emotional bullying, which explained the changes Andrea had seen in her son. She shared with the public charter

school that her son had been bullied. Andrea and her son's story inspired APEX Academy to develop a new program providing students with emotional and social training. That program, Andrea explained, is now part of the school's regular curriculum and continues to help students understand their emotions, confront bullying, and "how to handle unkindness." The school also has, among other things, a comprehensive policy evidencing its commitment "to providing a learning environment that is free from discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any kind." Aspire Public Schools, *Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination, and Bullying Policy*, <https://bit.ly/422OMji> (last visited Mar. 27, 2025).

Andrea's son has since graduated, and he is now a college sophomore at San Joaquin Delta College, where he is studying radiation technology. Her younger sons—a fourth grader and a high school sophomore—continue to benefit from the anti-bullying programs that remain an integral part of Aspire Public Schools.

Yolanda's and Andrea's experiences are not unique. Other parents shared that public charter schools provided a safe space for their children. For example, Lindsay Cordell said that her youngest son tends to attract bullies and "putting him in a traditional school is not going to accomplish what's best for students." And for that reason, Lindsay chose to send her son to a public charter school, which has made all the difference.

## **5. Public charter schools share a commitment to excellence that drives student success.**

While curricula or teaching methodologies may vary from one public charter school to another, the schools

share a commitment to excellence. Many public charter schools are academically rigorous, challenging students and preparing them for college and their careers. And several parents—like Susanna Pasillas—chose public charter schools for that reason.

*University Prep Charter School (Colo.).* Susanna Pasillas chose University Prep for its “rigorous and structured” curriculum that “allows children to grow and become their best selves.” Susanna wanted a rigorous academic environment for her daughters, but traditional public schools did not live up to her expectations and private schools were too expensive. University Prep, with its focus on preparing “every child for a four-year college degree and a life of opportunity,” was just what Susanna wanted. University Prep provides extended core classes to ensure student proficiency; for example, Susanna’s older daughter, a fifth grader, has a 90-minute math class and extended classes focused on writing and reading comprehension.

University Prep also teaches students about college options early and often. Susanna—who teaches first grade at University Prep—noted that elementary students don’t think about college until you plant “that little seed” and introduce them to the idea of college. To that end, each year, University Prep takes students on a field trip to college for a tour so that they can set foot there and begin to visualize that “it could be them.”

Excellence is not unique to University Prep—it is a theme among many public charter schools. Take, for example, BelovED Community Charter School, where “excellence is the norm,” according to Eshia Allen. In

addition to typical offerings—like advanced placement courses and post-secondary offerings at St. Peter’s University—the school also provides SAT and college readiness courses and college advisors. Eshia said that she has seen other parents pay for those services, but at BelovED “they have everything, it’s free, it’s here.” As a result, she continued, her children are “provided the best education” giving students at “this small school an advantage” they may not have without public charter schools.

Colorado’s Global Village Academy also strives for excellence. In fact, Colorado Governor Jared Polis recently highlighted the school’s academic accomplishments for low-income students in particular. Global Village, the governor said, “is a school that serves over 50% low-income students, and over 80% of 8th graders are at grade level or above on reading, over 90% on writing.” *League Applauds State Leadership for Prioritizing Public School Choice and Innovation*, Colorado League of Charter Schools, <https://bit.ly/4iVnzGF> (Jan. 10, 2025). He added that Global Village “and many others across our state are changing lives for the better” and that “there’s more work to do to make achievement like this the norm—in district schools, innovation schools, and charter schools—because every student means every student.” *From the Principal*, Global Village Academy, <https://bit.ly/42ko5XI> (Jan. 13, 2025). Put plainly, public charter schools provide opportunities previously unavailable to students.

Susanna, Eshia, and Keith were not the only parents with stories of excellence in their public charter schools. For example, Lane Williams talked about how Breakthrough Midtown names homerooms after colleges

to inspire students, and Lina Burgos spoke about how students at Hatikvah International Academy score 99th percentile on statewide assessments.

### CONCLUSION

Public charter schools provide parents with a choice in public education, which is reason enough to preserve their role in public education systems. But they also do more—public charter schools provide students with a place where they feel safe, where they are challenged, and where they are shown that they can succeed. But that choice and those opportunities may go away, greatly disrupting the education of millions of students and depriving parents of the chance to choose the public school that is best for their children. As Respondent notes, the students who need those opportunities most—students from minority and low-income families—will bear the brunt of taking away public charter schools and thus public school choice. Accordingly, the *Amici* Parents, the Fund, and the parent organizations urge this court to affirm.

Respectfully submitted,

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