

Dear Councilmember Tolbert,

I am the School Board President of Metro Deaf School and the parent of a 5th grader at the school. I am writing about the topic at your 3/10 meeting discussing halting conduit revenue bonds for charter schools.

Like you, I am a supporter of public schools. I have one daughter in public school and one at Metro Deaf. I assure you I would prefer to have both my kids attend our neighborhood school. It's a few blocks away. My oldest had a great experience there, but she isn't deaf. Our neighborhood school would not, or could not, serve my younger daughter. At Metro Deaf we found a place where she is treated with respect and dignity, where she has friends that she can communicate with, and she has full access to the school experience.

I urge you to consider the students like my daughter, why their parents made the decision to leave the public school system, and what will happen if their charter school is pushed to failure through city policies. It was not an easy decision to change schools. We don't like that her bus ride to school went from 5 minutes to 50 minutes, or that none of her school friends live in the neighborhood. We would love it if she could get an education from the school in our neighborhood, but she can't. I assume most other parents who make the difficult decision to change schools have gone through the same agony we have, most of them have children with disabilities, are immigrants and/or people of color. If successful charter schools are negatively targeted by the city council policies, what will happen to these children?

At Metro Deaf School this policy means we will not be able to continue to improve our property and we will not be able to build the gym that our students desperately need. We always intended to add a gym when we purchased the property on Energy Park Drive a few years ago. Community sport leagues are not always safe or accessible for our students, not to mention they need a space for PE classes. The policy will have an enormous impact on whether or not our Deaf, DeafBlind and hard-of-hearing students will have the same access to fitness and athletics that their hearing neighbors have.

Please support our school and other charter schools by not voting for this policy. If you have any questions about Metro Deaf School please contact me or our Executive Director, Dr. Susan Lane-Outlaw. We would also like to invite you to take a virtual tour (for now or in person next year) of Metro Deaf School when you are available.

Melissa Albert
Metro Deaf School
School Board President