



October 18, 2018

Dave Machado
Director, Office of Charter Schools
6307 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

Re: Impact Statement for Person County Schools
Charter School Application filed on behalf of Piedmont Career Academy

Dear Charter School Advisory Board Members and State Board of Education:

Person County Schools appreciates the opportunity to give the Boards feedback on the recent charter application submitted by Dr. Robert E. Daniel on behalf of the Piedmont Career Academy group. Person County Schools does oppose the approval of this charter school. Upon your review of the information provided within the application, you will be able to verify that the applicants have not provided any substantial data indicating that they will provide educational services that are not currently provided to all children enrolled in Person County Schools (PCS). PCS recognizes the challenges of educating at-risk children, and we accept the privilege of serving each child with pride.

Since my tenure began in May, 2017, the school board, administration, teachers, students, and community stakeholders have worked hard to create a vision of success for our students. For the first time in recent history, the school system underwent a strategic planning process to include its stakeholders in identifying goals and strategies to improve student achievement, to make our schools safe, to provide adequate resources to our schools, and to ensure our community stakeholders stay involved and are a part of our schools successes. We are now in the first year of our [PCS22 plan](#) and look forward to celebrating the growth in our schools for many years to come.

PCS is a rural, Tier 1 county on the Virginia border that over the last three school years, 20% of the local education agency students have attended charter schools. This shift in students attending county charters has created a reversion of \$8 million in local and state funding. With limited discretionary funds, the current percentage of students attending charter schools makes it difficult to implement quality programing in our K-12

schools. Our district is concerned that any additional students attending a charter would put additional stress on our operating budget, thereby, limiting the innovative programming we have started with our PCS22 strategic plan. On page 9 of the application, it notes that Piedmont Career Academy expects a fair percentage of the enrolled students will come from LEAs other than Person County Schools. However, on p. 57 of the application, the projected enrollment chart for years 1 through 5 has 315 students of the 350 total coming from Person County Schools. On page 63 of the charter application under the Financial Plan, the application again shows 90% of the total first year students coming from Person County Schools. I would argue this is more than a fair share coming from PCS. If the year 5 number were to come to fruition, it would increase our total reversion an additional \$2,565,649 to nearly \$11 million. Of a total budget of \$48 million, this would constitute 23% of our total budget, significantly reducing the programming and staff support we would be able to provide the students in Person County Schools.

The application also notes on page 8 that Piedmont Career Academy seeks to locate the charter school in the southern end of Person County to make the school reasonably accessible not only to “PCS students, but also to students in northern Durham, western Granville, northeastern Orange, and eastern Caswell counties as well.” The application also notes that they are seeking approval from the Person County Commissioners for a long-term lease on the old Helena School facility. On the August 6, 2018 Person County Commissioners meeting agenda, there was an action item on the agenda entitled: Lease agreement of old Helena School to Piedmont Career Academy Public School Charter School Lease. The Piedmont Board of Directors requested reconsideration by the Board of Commissioners to move forward with constructing a lease agreement for the old Helena School property once a charter was granted by the state. According to the [minutes](#) of the meeting, the Chairmen asked the Board if there was interest in pursuing a lease agreement, hearing none, the discussion ended with no motion to move forward.

Further, on page 61 of the application, the applicant further explains the Academy’s plan to obtain a building by identifying vacant warehouses and/or former factory sites in Caswell and Person Counties. It is understood in the region that many of these sites are found within or near the Roxboro town limits. If Piedmont Career Academy were to choose a location in or around Roxboro, it will limit access to the counties stated above and alternatively target additional students in Person County.

One area that PCS struggles with is maintaining qualified bus drivers under the new CDL requirement. Being on the border with Virginia, some of our bus drivers live in Virginia, subsequently, having to maintain a CDL in their home state while meeting

the regulations of bus driving in North Carolina. This, along with the increased accountability of the health assessment for bus drivers, has led to a shortage in available drivers. On page 58 of the application under the transportation plan, it was noted that the applicant had met with me and I was open to the idea of negotiating a contract to allow Piedmont Career Academy students to be picked up by LEA buses and then transfer to a “shuttle” school to then be transported to the charter school. While I did meet with Dr. Daniel, no such agreement was made nor inferred. Such action would need to have board action and PCS Board of Education is firmly against transporting Piedmont Career Academy students on PCS buses.

The Piedmont Career Academy application describes on p. 9 and 10 how their education plan will compare to or differ from that of the local LEAs. The application notes their focus on Project-Based Learning (PBL), Student-Led Conferences (SLC), Big Picture Learning (BPL), and Career Seminar for Seniors with internships. Person County Schools PCS22 strategic plan has a primary focus on personalized learning in grades 6-12. Our Launch e6 and IGNITE strategies create 4 and 7 year individualized plans of study for high and middle school students to ensure coursework is centered on students interest and need. Likewise, these plans include current and future plans for student acceleration, enrichment opportunities, academic supports to meet the individual students’ needs. Our school staff has undergone and continues to participate in professional development to collaborate with district leaders through a design thinking approach (modeled after the Stanford d.School) to learn and design a framework to both personalized and digital learning. We have spent the planning year for PCS22 to focus on our district data, school improvement plans, and actions around innovative, personalized, and digital practices.

Through the Launch e6 and IGNITE initiatives, PCS students in grades 6-12 are offered various exploratory career and technical education courses and are encouraged and coached to complete career pathways in their personalized plans. PCS offers 17 in-house Career Pathways in grades 9-12 and have worked to establish a strong partnership with Piedmont Community College to offer an additional 14 pathways to PCS High School/Early College students that are aligned to current industry needs. PCS currently has 11 programs of study that provide a work study, with business agreements, to 9-12 students. Additionally, PCS has expanded its CTE opportunities and introduction for students in grades 6-8. PCS currently offers 12 CTE courses for students in grade 6-8. Additionally, students in our Occupational Study Program are required to have 150 school-based work hours, 225 community-based work hours, and 225 competitive-based work hours to graduate.

In closing, I would like to thank the Boards for allowing me to provide this impact statement on behalf of Person County Schools. All educators want what is best for their students. PCS shares Piedmont Career Academy's willingness to educate the children of Person County. However, the addition of another charter school in Person County will adversely limit programming and staff support for students in PCS due to funding reversions. Likewise, the applicants have not provided any substantial data indicating that they will provide educational services that are not currently provided to all children enrolled in Person County Schools. Person County Schools is committed to providing what is in the best interest of all students in Person County.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rodney L. Peterson', written in a cursive style.

Rodney L. Peterson, Ed. D.
Superintendent, Person County Schools