

public citizens for children + youth

Testimony

Presented to Philadelphia City Council

Re: Resolution No. 190198

by Tomea Sippio-Smith
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Public Citizens for Children and Youth

March 21, 2019

Good morning. My name is Tomea Sippio-Smith. I'm the Education Policy Director at PCCY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the resolution today.

Pennsylvania's charter school law gives the Charter Appeals Board/CAB tremendous power. It is the only body that hears charter school cases if a charter school appeals Philadelphia's school board's decision to deny, revoke or renew a charter school application. It can override the local school board's decision and allow a charter school to open or continue to operate unless and until the district challenges the CAB decision in Commonwealth Court.

Currently, 5 of the members of the CAB are serving expired terms. All were appointed by former Governor Tom Corbett. 1 seat is vacant. PCCY is calling for a moratorium on CAB proceedings until all Board Members are serving unexpired terms and the vacancy is filled.

To be clear, this petition was not launched as an attack on the governor. While we call on Governor Wolf to appoint new members, the Senate has at least as much at stake to fill the seats with Board Members serving unexpired terms and filling the vacancy. While the Governor appoints, the Senate must also approve any new appointees. *One* of the reasons we called attention to the current situation was to bring all parties to the table to resolve this issue.



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For Philadelphia and its students, this resolution matters. The Philadelphia school district just regained local control and has a new school board. It just exercised an option not to approve charters for 3 new schools. If the charters appeal the decision, the CAB hears the case. It removes the decision from the Philadelphia School District, a district that receives high marks on its authorizing from pro-charter organizations that promote high quality authorizing and places the decision right back in the hands of the state. Considering the gravity of their reviews and the impact their decisions have on Philadelphia's students placing a moratorium on CAB proceedings until all Board Members are serving unexpired terms and the open seat is filled is the correct and appropriate decision.



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