*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | November 30, 2018 |
| **Subject:** | Charter Schools – Notification of Intended Actions and Report on Conditions for Hampden Charter School of Science West and UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester |

At its meeting in February 2013, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) authorized the Commissioner to act on its behalf in "(a) granting charter renewals that do not involve probation; (b) approving charter amendments that do not involve changes in grade span, maximum enrollment, or districts served; and (c) removing or continuing conditions imposed on charters of charter schools; provided that the Commissioner shall report to the Board on all charter renewals, charter amendments, and conditions that have been so approved; and provided further, that the Commissioner shall notify the Board in advance of all such intended actions, and a Board member may request that the Commissioner place the charter matter(s) on the agenda of the Board for discussion and action."

I intend to remove the conditions currently imposed on the charters of Hampden Charter School of Science West and UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester. The rationale for each of these intended actions can be found starting on page two of this memorandum.

Please let me know by **Friday, December 7, 2018,** if you wish to have either of these proposed actions brought to the full Board for review and vote at the December meeting.

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| **Hampden Charter School of Science West** | | | | |
| **Type of Charter** (Commonwealth or Horace Mann) | Commonwealth | **Location** | West Springfield  (as of November 5, 2018) |
| **Regional or Non-Regional?** | Regional | **Districts in Region** (if applicable) | Agawam, Holyoke, Westfield, and West Springfield |
| **Year Opened** | 2018 | **Year(s) Renewed** | N/A |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 588 | **Current Enrollment** | 209[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| **Grade Span in Charter** | 6-12 | **Current Grade Span** | 6-9 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 92[[2]](#footnote-2) | **Current Age of School** | First year of operation |
| **Mission Statement**  The mission of Hampden Charter School of Science West (HCSS-West) is to provide a college preparatory-focused education to the youth of every race and ethnic group in Agawam, Holyoke, West Springfield, and Westfield in a safe, academically challenging, and caring educational environment. Our promise is to sustain small school size, to provide extended math and science curriculum, individualized attention, college guidance, and university outreach programs, and to encourage student-teacher-parent partnership. Fulfillment of our mission will empower our students with the support necessary to reach their highest intellectual, emotional, social, and physical potentials, building on the inherent promise to aid students’ preparation for college. | | | | |

**School History**

In February 2017, the Board awarded a second charter to the board of trustees of Hampden Charter School of Science. The first school, Hampden Charter School of Science, was renamed Hampden Charter School of Science East (HCSS-East) and is located in Chicopee. The second charter, Hampden Charter School of Science West (HCSS-West), proposed to open for the 2018-2019 school year. In March 2018, interim commissioner Jeff Wulfson approved a change in location for HCSS-West from Westfield to West Springfield. In August 2018, due to a delay in preparing the building in West Springfield for occupancy, the board of trustees submitted a request to co-locate the new charter school temporarily at the existing HCSS-East in Chicopee instead of its proposed location in West Springfield for no more than eleven weeks. Given the evidence provided to support the request, I granted the request to locate HCSS-West temporarily at the HCSS-East location and required the school to meet four conditions, in addition to the required opening procedures for all new charter schools. The school met all requirements of the opening procedures process for the Chicopee and West Springfield sites prior to occupancy. HCSS-West is now located in West Springfield.

**Progress Towards Meeting Conditions**

**Condition 1:** The school will commence the school year as scheduled on Monday, September 10, 2018 at 20 Johnson Road in Chicopee unless the school can occupy its proposed location at 511 Main Street in West Springfield.

**Status: Met**

The first day of school for all students of HCSS-West was Monday, September 10th at the Chicopee location.

**Condition 2:** The school will establish occupancy in West Springfield no later than Monday, November 26, 2018.

**Status: Met**

HCSS-West opened its doors to students at its location in West Springfield on Monday, November 5, 2018.

**Condition 3:** During the school's occupancy in Chicopee, the school will provide weekly updates to the Department of enrollment counts by the close of business on Friday each week. These enrollment counts should indicate the total number of students in attendance, and the total number of students remaining on the waitlist. The school must maintain student enrollment levels adequate to provide a strong academic program and financial and organizational viability, as determined by the Department.

**Status: Met**

Mr. Tarkan Topcuoglu, the schools’ chief executive officer, provided weekly updates each Friday from September 14th through November 2nd. During the eight weeks of co-location in Chicopee, the school’s enrollment decreased to 209 students, as reported in October SIMS, 90 percent of its pre-enrollment of 233 students in March 2018.[[3]](#footnote-3) The school has reported an increase in enrollment to 216 students during its occupancy in Chicopee, 93 percent of its pre-enrollment.

**Condition 4:** The school will promptly and effectively communicate with the Department regarding any and all significant matters regarding the 511 Main Street location in West Springfield within a reasonable period of time but in any event no later than 72 hours after occurrence.

**Status: Met**

Mr. Topcuoglu incorporated updates regarding progress with the West Springfield property within his weekly communications. The Department appreciates the efforts of Jay Steup, Building Commissioner of the West Springfield Building Department, and his assistance during the Department’s opening procedures process.

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| **UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester** | | | |
| **Type of Charter** (Commonwealth or Horace Mann) | Horace Mann | **Location** | Boston |
| **Regional or Non-Regional?** | Non-Regional | **Districts in Region** (if applicable) | N/A |
| **Year Opened** | 2013 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2018 |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 820[[4]](#footnote-4) | **Current Enrollment** | 725[[5]](#footnote-5) |
| **Grade Span in Charter** | PK-8 | **Current Grade Span** | PK-8 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 552[[6]](#footnote-6) | **Current Age of School** | 6 years |
| **Mission Statement**  UP Academy Dorchester will ensure that its students acquire the knowledge, skills, and strength of character necessary to succeed on the path to college and to achieve their full potential. | | | |

**School History**

In February 2018, interim commissioner Jeff Wulfson renewed the charter of UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester (UAD) with conditions related to governance. The school’s board of trustees oversees two Horace Mann Charter Schools in Boston, UAD and UP Academy Charter School of Boston (UAB), which is in its eighth year of operation. The board of trustees contracts with an education management organization, UP Education Network, to manage and support both schools. Over its charter term and at the time of UAD’s renewal, there were sufficient on-going concerns regarding oversight by the board of trustees of the school and UP Education Network to warrant conditions.UAD has met the conditions; however, the school has not consistently met state performance standards for academic growth and proficiency during its first charter term. I will continue to closely monitor academic performance as the school implements its action plan for improvement.

**Progress Towards Meeting Conditions**

**Condition 1:** Until further notice, the school must submit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department), at [charterschools@doe.mass.edu](mailto:charterschools@doe.mass.edu) or 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA, 02148, board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school’s board members. Additionally, if board materials do not already include this information, the school must also submit monthly financial statements.

**Status: Met**

The school has provided board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school’s board members, as required. Financial statements were also provided as required.

**Condition 2:** By February 28, 2018, the school’s board of trustees must engage in training conducted by an external consultant, acceptable to and approved in advance by the Department, on the roles and responsibilities of a board of trustees for a charter school and on the Open Meeting Law.

**Status: Met**

The board of trustees employed Board on Track to provide a training on the roles and responsibilities of a board of trustees for a charter school and on the Open Meeting Law. Six trustees attended the training on February 28, 2018. Three trustees completed the training on alternate dates, March 28th, March 29th, and April 26th. A tenth trustee resigned on March 21, 2018.

**Condition 3:** By March 30, 2018, the school’s board of trustees must have completed a comprehensive self-evaluation of its practices and its capacity. **The self-evaluation must be submitted to the Department.**

**Status: Met**

The ten members of the board of trustees each completed a self-evaluation using a tool from Board on Track. It was the second such evaluation performed by the board of trustees using the same tool. The completed evaluation was submitted to the Department on March 30, 2018.

**Condition 4:** By April 15, 2018, the school’s board of trustees will revise its bylaws to increase the number of total board meetings each year and align them with current laws and regulations, and submit them to the Department for approval.

**Status: Met**

The board of trustees worked with Department staff to revise its bylaws to align with current laws and regulations. The number of annual board meetings increased from five to seven, and regular committee meetings occur quarterly. UAD and UAB specific committees meet, at a minimum, on a bi-monthly basis. I approved the revised bylaws on August 17, 2018.

**Condition 5:** By April 30, 2018, the **board of trustees** will also conduct a comprehensive review of school programming and submit an action plan to address areas in need of improvement to the Department. The review and action plan must address: implementation of the school’s mission and key design elements; academic programming and performance; appropriate board oversight of the school’s leader(s); and how the board will annually evaluate the school’s educational management organization.

**Status: Met**

The board of trustees submitted an action plan on April 30, 2018. The action plan included all required elements.

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If you have any questions regarding removal of these conditions or require additional information, please contact Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (781-338-3218); Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner (781-338-3222); Jeff Wulfson, Deputy Commissioner (781-338-6500); or me.

1. As reported in the Student Information Management System (SIMS) as of October 1, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As reported in the [Initial Report of Charter School Waitlist as of March 15, 2018](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/fy2019/waitlist.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Department uses pre-enrollment figures to calculate projected annual tuition amounts based on enrollment figures provided by the charter school and projected charter tuition rates determined by the Office of School Finance. Enrollment figures and tuition rates are updated based upon SIMS enrollment reports and end of year financial reporting submitted on October 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In 2016, UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester was granted a temporary enrollment increase from 750 to 820 for three fiscal years, returning to the originally chartered maximum enrollment of 750 by 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. As reported in the Student Information Management System (SIMS) as of October 1, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As reported in the [Initial Report of Charter School Waitlist as of March 15, 2018](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/fy2019/waitlist.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)