



September 27, 2023

Sen. Kristin Philips-Hill & Rep. Mike Sturla
Co-Chairs of Basic Education Funding Commission
PA State Capitol
501 N 3rd Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Urgent Appeal for Representation and Equity in Philadelphia's Educational Landscape

Dear Co-Chairs of the Basic Education Funding Commission,

We write this letter representing the African American Charter School Coalition (AACSC), an organization committed to championing the rights and interests of a significant portion of Philadelphia's public school community. As you undertake the monumental task of addressing the Commonwealth Court's directive stemming from the William Penn School District et al. v. Pennsylvania Department of Education et al. case, we find it imperative to bring to your attention a pressing concern that threatens to undermine the very essence of the "thorough and efficient system of public education" that we are all striving to achieve.

Despite representing a substantial third of Philadelphia's public school community, Philadelphia Public Charter Schools find themselves conspicuously absent from the critical discussions and deliberations that are shaping the future of education in our state. This exclusion is not just a matter of representation but a grave injustice that echoes the racial bias and inequities that have been a longstanding concern for our member schools.

For 21 months, we have awaited a response, a recognition, or even an acknowledgment from Dr. Watlington, the Philadelphia School Superintendent, regarding the investigation commissioned to Ballard Spahr. The continuous delay in releasing the report has not only fostered a climate of mistrust and uncertainty but has also exacerbated the racial inequities that we face.

We, therefore, stand before you to:

- Advocate for the immediate inclusion of Philadelphia Public Charter Schools in the pivotal discussions and hearings that are currently underway, ensuring that our voice, representing a significant portion of the public school community, is heard and valued.
- Urgently request the transparent and swift release of the Ballard Spahr report, a step that is critical in fostering accountability and initiating a dialogue rooted in truth and a commitment to

rectifying the pervasive racial bias, retaliation and targeting of charter schools by the School District of Philadelphia, the Board of Education and the Charter School Office.

- Call upon the Mayor, the Board of Education, and Dr. Watlington to break the silence and actively engage in a constructive dialogue aimed at addressing the concerns raised by our coalition, fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach to overcoming the challenges at hand.

We are not just stakeholders in this endeavor; we are custodians of the dreams and aspirations of thousands of young minds who look up to us for guidance, education, and a promise of a brighter future. We have a voice, and we MUST be heard, respected, and included in the larger narrative.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and remain hopeful for a collaborative pathway forward, one that is rooted in justice, equity, and inclusivity, honoring the spirit of the Commonwealth Court's decision and our constitutional mandate.

We look forward to your swift and decisive action in this regard.

Thank you,

African American Charter School Coalition (AACSC)