



July 27, 2026

Members of the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission:

I appreciate the opportunity to appeal Hamilton County Schools' denial of Chattanooga Preparatory School's emergency charter amendment request. I respectfully ask the Commission to approve Chattanooga Prep's request to increase its authorized enrollment from 500 to 575 students because I believe doing so is in the best interests of the students, families, and community we serve.

At its core, this appeal is about educational opportunity. More than fifty young men accepted enrollment offers, attended summer programming, purchased uniforms, and prepared to begin the school year as Chattanooga Prep students. Their families intentionally chose our school because they believe it provides the best opportunity for their sons to succeed. A large majority of these students are siblings of graduates or returning students. The question before the Commission is whether those students should lose that opportunity despite the school's demonstrated ability to serve them.

Before discussing the reasons for this appeal, I want to acknowledge our responsibility. Chattanooga Prep exceeded its authorized enrollment, and as Chief Executive Officer, I accept full responsibility for that. Our enrollment projections underestimated the number of students who would return and the number of new families who would choose Chattanooga Prep. As soon as we recognized that enrollment was exceeding our authorized capacity, we immediately notified Hamilton County Schools and pursued the emergency amendment process established under Tennessee law. We addressed the issue openly because accountability requires honesty, transparency, and a willingness to correct mistakes.

Our forecasting error did not occur because we ignored the data. It occurred because the school experienced a level of improvement that exceeded every reasonable projection. When enrollment projections were developed, Chattanooga Prep was coming off one of the most difficult years in its history. Student attrition had been unusually high, staff turnover had created instability, and confidence within the community had declined. Based on those realities, conservative enrollment projections were appropriate.

One of the most difficult challenges facing any school is rebuilding trust after a period of instability, particularly when serving families who have historically felt underserved by the educational system. Over the past year, our leadership team intentionally focused on earning that trust by establishing a clear vision for the school, following through on our commitments, communicating consistently, strengthening relationships with families, and demonstrating every day that we genuinely care about the success of their sons. Trust is not restored through marketing or promises. It is earned through consistent actions over time.

The response from families exceeded every projection we developed. Parents who had considered leaving decided to remain at Chattanooga Prep. Former students sought to return, and new families chose our school because they believed in the direction the school was heading. By the conclusion of reenrollment, ninety-six percent of our students returned, staff retention reached ninety percent, and confidence in



Chattanooga Prep had been restored to a level we had not anticipated. Our enrollment forecasting error was the result of that renewed confidence.

Throughout my career, I have focused on understanding how boys learn and what helps them become successful young men. Research and experience continue to point to the same conclusion. Boys thrive in environments where they experience a genuine sense of belonging, where there is less social pressure to hide failure, and where mistakes become opportunities for growth rather than reasons for embarrassment. That kind of psychological safety does not lower expectations. Instead, it gives boys the confidence to ask questions, take academic risks, persevere through challenges, and continue growing after setbacks. Chattanooga Prep was intentionally designed to create that type of learning environment because we believe every young man deserves a place where he is known, challenged, supported, and encouraged to reach his full potential. Families have responded to that environment because they have seen the difference it has made in their sons.

The renewed confidence in Chattanooga Prep was reflected not only in our reenrollment numbers but also in the district's own review. Hamilton County Schools conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Chattanooga Prep's academic program, finances, governance, staffing, facilities, operations, and organizational capacity. Our leadership team participated in a thorough capacity interview and provided detailed information about every aspect of the school's operations. After completing that review, the district's professional evaluation team recommended approval because it determined Chattanooga Prep had the capacity to educate 575 students successfully. That recommendation is significant because this appeal is not about whether Chattanooga Prep has sufficient classrooms, qualified teachers, financial resources, or organizational systems. The evidence demonstrated that we do. The question before the Commission is whether an enrollment forecasting error should outweigh the district's finding that the school has the capacity to educate these students well.

Since this issue arose, we have strengthened our enrollment procedures by improving forecasting methods, implementing additional verification steps, increasing internal enrollment monitoring, and adding stronger controls throughout the enrollment process. We have learned from this experience, accepted responsibility for our mistake, and taken meaningful steps to ensure it does not happen again.

As you consider this appeal, I also ask you to consider Chattanooga Prep's record. During the 2022–2023 school year, Chattanooga Prep earned a B letter grade and TVAAS Level 5. Those accomplishments demonstrate that this school can produce exceptional academic growth for the students it serves. While recent accountability measures reflect a period of instability, they should not define the future of a school that has already demonstrated excellence and is once again building the conditions necessary for sustained success.

Many of our students come from feeder schools where families have long hoped for additional educational opportunities for their sons. They are choosing Chattanooga Prep because they want a school where relationships matter, expectations are high, and every student is known as an individual. They are choosing a school that believes every young man deserves adults who will challenge him, encourage him, and refuse to give up on him. The dramatic increase in student retention and renewed confidence from families suggest that Chattanooga Prep is once again fulfilling that promise.



School improvement is rarely measured by a single year or a single accountability score. It is reflected in whether students return, whether teachers remain committed, whether families regain confidence, and whether a school continues moving in the right direction. Over the past year, Chattanooga Prep has made measurable progress in each of those areas. Ironically, those improvements created an enrollment challenge that we should have anticipated more accurately. While we accept responsibility for that mistake, it is important to recognize that the issue before the Commission resulted from a successful turnaround that attracted and retained more families than anyone reasonably expected.

Ultimately, this appeal is about what is in the best interests of students. Denying this amendment will not improve educational opportunities for the young men affected by this decision. It will simply prevent more than fifty students from attending the school their families intentionally selected, despite the district's determination that Chattanooga Prep has the capacity to educate them successfully. These families acted in good faith. They chose Chattanooga Prep because they believed it was the best place for their sons, and I respectfully ask that they not lose that opportunity because our projections failed to anticipate the confidence our community would place in the school's turnaround.

I understand the importance of accountability because it is one of the values we teach our students every day. Accountability means acknowledging mistakes, learning from them, strengthening our systems, and continuing to do what is right for students. That is exactly what Chattanooga Prep has done throughout this process.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this appeal and for your continued commitment to expanding educational opportunities for Tennessee's students. On behalf of the families who have entrusted us with their sons and the young men whose futures will be directly affected by this decision, I respectfully ask the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission to approve Chattanooga Preparatory School's emergency charter amendment increasing our authorized enrollment from 500 to 575 students.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy F. Kemp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Troy F. Kemp, Sr.
Chief Executive Officer
Prep Public Schools