



Executive Director's Recommendation Opportunity Youth Academy Appeal

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated ("T.C.A.") § 49-13-108, sponsors proposing to open a new charter school may appeal the denial of its amended application by a local board of education to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission ("Commission"). On August 6, 2026, the sponsor of Opportunity Youth Academy ("sponsor" or "OYA") appealed the denial of its amended application by the Memphis-Shelby County Schools ("MSCS") Board of Education to the Commission.

Based on the procedural history, findings of fact, analysis, and Review Committee Recommendation Report, attached hereto, I believe that the decision to deny the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application was not contrary to the best interests of the students, local education agency ("LEA"), or community.¹ Therefore, I recommend that the Commission uphold the decision of the MSCS Board of Education to deny the amended application for Opportunity Youth Academy.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108 and Commission Policy 2.000, Commission staff and an independent charter application review committee conducted a de novo, on the record review of the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application. In accordance with the Tennessee State Board of Education's Charter School Application Scoring Rubric ("rubric"), for an application to be deemed ready for approval, the summary rating for each of the major sections must meet the standard. In addition, the Commission is required to hold a public hearing in the district where the proposed charter school seeks to locate.²

In order to overturn the decision of the local board of education, the Commission must find that the application meets or exceeds the metrics outlined in the scoring rubric and that approval of the amended charter application is in the best interests of the students, local education agency, or community.³ If the local board of education's decision is appealed, then the Commission can approve the application, and thereby authorize the school, or can affirm the

¹ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

² T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

³ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

local board's decision to deny.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On November 24, 2025, the sponsor submitted a letter of intent to Memphis-Shelby County Schools expressing its intention to file a charter school application.
2. The sponsor submitted its initial application for Opportunity Youth Academy to MSCS on February 1, 2026.
3. MSCS assembled a review committee to review and score the Opportunity Youth Academy initial application.
4. On March 11, 2026, the MSCS Review Committee conducted a capacity interview with representatives of Opportunity Youth Academy.
5. The MSCS Review Committee reviewed and scored the Opportunity Youth Academy initial application, indicating concerns with the academic model, programming and focus, community support and demand, transportation, facilities, missing, incomplete or misaligned components, fiscal operations, governance structure and long-term sustainability, heavy education service provider ("ESP")/charter management organization ("CMO") reliance, and local leadership capacity.
6. On April 28, 2026, the MSCS Board of Education voted to deny the Opportunity Youth Academy initial application.
7. The sponsor amended and resubmitted its application for Opportunity Youth Academy to MSCS on May 29, 2026.
8. The MSCS Review Committee reviewed and scored the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application based on the scoring rubric and rated the academic, operations, finance, and addenda sections as Partially Meets Standard.
9. On July 28, 2026, the MSCS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Opportunity Youth Academy.
10. The sponsor appealed the denial of the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application in writing to the Commission on August 6, 2026, including submission of all required documents per Commission Policy 2.000.
11. The Commission's Review Committee independently analyzed and scored the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application using the state's scoring rubric.
12. On September 18, 2026, the Commission staff held a public hearing at Barnes Auditorium in Memphis, Tennessee. At the public hearing, the Executive Director, sitting as the

Commission's designee, heard presentations from the sponsor and the LEA and received public comment regarding the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application.

13. The Commission's Review Committee conducted a capacity interview with key members of the Opportunity Youth Academy leadership team on September 22, 2026, via Microsoft Teams.
14. After the capacity interview, the Commission's Review Committee determined a final consensus rating of the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application, which served as the basis for the Review Committee Recommendation Report, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.
15. The Commission staff conducted a full review of the record, which includes the initial and amended applications submitted by the sponsor, documentation submitted by MSCS, and the findings of the public hearing and public comment. The Commission's General Counsel conducted a full review and legal analysis of the record.

FINDINGS OF FACT

District Denial of Initial Application

The Review Committee assembled by MSCS to review and score the Opportunity Youth Academy initial application consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Kimberly Adams	MSCS Senior Manager, Charter Finance and Federal Programs
LaKeshia Ballard	MSCS Data Analyst, Facilities
Toria Brown	MSCS Manager, Alternative Schools
Erin Conley	Expert External Reviewer
John Dodd	MSCS RTI2 Advisor, Curriculum and Instruction
Casaundra Dumas	MSCS Data Specialist, SIM
Angelina Fox	MSCS Registered Nurse, Health Services
Jennifer Geter	MSCS Regional Manager, Mental Health Services
LaSheka Hayslett	MSCS Advisor, Transportation
Adrienne Hill	MSCS Extended Learning Advisor, Student Services
Tonia Jefferson	MSCS Advisor, Community Outreach and Parent Engagement
Richard Lewis	MSCS School Operations Manager, Nutrition Services
LaTonya McGowan	MSCS Safety and Security Advisor, Charter Schools
Teneisha McNeil	MSCS ESL Advisor, Charter Schools
Mark Modrcin	Expert External Reviewer
Grant Monda	Charter Leader Reviewer

Name	Title
Cassandra Moore	MSCS Instructional Advisor, Charter Schools
Hannah Pallotta	MSCS Senior Advisor, Research and Performance Management
Alexis Person	MSCS HR Manager, Benefits
Brant Riedel	MSCS Director, Assessment and Accountability
Jacqueline Robinson-Tate	MSCS Advisor, Enrollment and Attendance
Dedriene Rogers	MSCS Exceptional Education Advisor, Charter Schools
Jean Saulsberry	MSCS Clerical Assistant, Parent Engagement
Quache Spencer	Lead Reviewer-Director, Charter Schools Organizational Quality
James Wiggins	MSCS Advisor, Virtual Schools

The Opportunity Youth Academy initial application received the following ratings from the MSCS Review Committee:

Sections	Ratings
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard
Addenda	Partially Meets Standard

After the MSCS Review Committee completed its review and scoring of the initial application, its analysis was presented to the MSCS Board of Education on April 28, 2026. The MSCS Board of Education voted to deny the initial application of Opportunity Youth Academy.

District Denial of Amended Application

The Review Committee assembled by MSCS to review and score the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Kimberly Adams	MSCS Senior Manager, Charter Finance and Federal Programs
Erin Conley	Expert External Reviewer
John Dodd	MSCS RTI2 Advisor, Curriculum and Instruction
Tonia Jefferson	MSCS Advisor, Community Outreach and Parent Engagement
Richard Lewis	MSCS School Operations Manager, Nutrition Services
LaTonya McGowan	MSCS Safety and Security Advisor, Charter Schools
Teneisha McNeil	MSCS ESL Advisor, Charter Schools
Mark Modrcin	Expert External Reviewer
Grant Monda	Charter Leader Reviewer

Name	Title
Hannah Pallotta	MSCS Senior Advisor, Research and Performance Management
Brant Riedel	MSCS Director, Assessment and Accountability
Dedriene Rogers	MSCS Exceptional Education Advisor, Charter Schools
Jean Saulsberry	MSCS Clerical Assistant, Parent Engagement
Quache Spencer	Lead Reviewer-Director, Charter Schools Organizational Quality

Upon resubmission, the MSCS Review Committee conducted a review of the amended application, and the amended application received the following ratings from the MSCS Review Committee:

Sections	Ratings
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard
Addenda	Partially Meets Standard

After the MSCS Review Committee completed its review and scoring of the amended application, its analysis was presented to the MSCS Board of Education on July 28, 2026. At the July 28, 2026, board meeting, the MSCS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Opportunity Youth Academy.

Commission Review Committee's Evaluation of the Application

Following the denial of the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application and subsequent appeal to the Commission, Commission staff assembled a diverse review committee of internal and external experts to independently evaluate and score the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application. This Review Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Ashley Davis	External Reviewer
Neven Holland	External Reviewer
Maggie Lund	Commission Staff
Rebecca Ledebuhr	Commission Staff
Tom McGrath	Commission Staff
Claire Seguin	Commission Staff

The Commission's Review Committee conducted an initial review and scoring of the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application, a capacity interview with the sponsor, and a final evaluation and scoring of the amended application resulting in a consensus rating for each major section. The committee's consensus rating of the Opportunity Youth Academy application

was as follows:

Sections	Ratings
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard
Addenda	Partially Meets Standard

The Review Committee recommends the denial of the amended application for Opportunity Youth Academy because the applicant failed to provide sufficient evidence in the academic, operational, financial, and addenda sections to demonstrate that the application meets the required criteria of the rubric.

The applicant's Educational Program Design and Capacity partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding enrollment viability, implementation feasibility, and the applicant's demonstrated capacity to execute the proposed educational model. While the applicant presents a compelling mission focused on serving disconnected and at-risk youth through personalized learning, individualized student support, and workforce development, the application does not provide sufficient evidence that the proposed student population can be successfully recruited and enrolled. The applicant relies heavily on broad citywide data and references a successful model implemented in New Jersey, but provides limited evidence of community-specific demand, formalized recruitment partnerships, or a clear strategy for adapting the model to the Memphis and Frayser context. Additionally, the application lacks sufficient detail regarding how personalized learning, mastery-based instruction, and individualized supports will function in practice, particularly for students with varying academic deficiencies and credit needs. There is insufficient evidence regarding whether the proposed staffing structure can realistically deliver the intensive interventions, counseling, and individualized support services promised by the model. Collectively, these weaknesses demonstrate that the applicant has not yet established sufficient evidence of enrollment viability or implementation capacity necessary to ensure successful academic outcomes.

The applicant's Operations Plan and Capacity partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding governance development, staffing readiness, operational execution, and the applicant's preparedness to serve a highly vulnerable student population. While the governing board demonstrates commitment to the mission and the applicant has identified support from its ESP, several key governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and operational systems remain underdeveloped. The application does not clearly articulate how local leadership will oversee critical functions, including instructional supervision, compliance, student support services, data management, and professional development, particularly during the pre-opening

period and the early years of operation. Additionally, critical staffing positions are inconsistently reflected across the application, budget, and startup plans, raising concerns about implementation feasibility. Recruitment strategies rely heavily on traditional pipelines despite the specialized expertise required to serve students with significant academic and social-emotional needs. Furthermore, transportation plans remain largely conceptual despite transportation being a critical component for successfully re-engaging at-risk youth. Taken together, these concerns indicate that the applicant has not demonstrated sufficient operational readiness or internal capacity to implement the proposed school model effectively.

The applicant's Budget and Finance partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding financial sustainability, startup funding, and key budget assumptions. The proposed financial model relies heavily on anticipated revenue sources that remain unsecured, including a Charter Schools Program ("CSP") startup grant that was not awarded. Although the applicant identified alternative fundraising and grant-seeking strategies during the capacity interview, these sources remain speculative and do not adequately address the resulting startup funding gap. Additional concerns exist regarding the sufficiency of budgeted facility renovation costs and the long-term viability of staffing assumptions that appear to depend on hiring predominantly novice educators. The application does not adequately demonstrate how the school would absorb unexpected facility expenses, maintain competitive compensation, or retain staff over time while serving a student population that requires intensive support. As a result, the committee found insufficient evidence that the proposed budget provides a sustainable financial foundation for long-term operation.

The applicant's Addenda partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding replication, oversight, compliance, and student recruitment. While the applicant highlights the ESP's success serving opportunity youth in New Jersey, the application provides limited evidence demonstrating how the model will be effectively adapted to the specific needs of the Memphis and the Frayser community. The application also lacks sufficient detail on the ESP selection process, oversight mechanisms, accountability measures, and the organizational capacity needed to support expansion into Tennessee. Additionally, the applicant has not adequately demonstrated how it will comply with the specialized enrollment verification and reporting requirements associated with opportunity public charter schools, including maintaining the required percentage of at-risk students. Concerns also remain regarding the absence of formal recruitment partnerships, enrollment pipelines, and documented commitments necessary to support projected enrollment targets. Collectively, these deficiencies indicate that the applicant has not provided sufficient evidence that the model can be successfully replicated, appropriately overseen, or sustained within the proposed operating environment.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Review Committee found that the sponsor did not

meet or exceed the standard for approval based on the state board's scoring rubric.

For additional information regarding the Review Committee's evaluation of the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application, please see **Exhibit A** for the complete Review Committee Recommendation Report, which is fully incorporated herein by reference.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to statute⁴ and Commission Policy 2.000, a public hearing chaired by the Executive Director was held on September 18, 2026. Representatives from Memphis-Shelby County Schools at the public hearing focused on the quality of the application review process, the support provided to the applicant throughout the review, and the reasons for the application's denial. Representatives from MSCS indicated that the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application was denied after the district determined that it did not sufficiently demonstrate the academic, operational, organizational, and financial capacity necessary to successfully implement the proposed school model. MSCS described the district's charter application review process, including multiple rounds of review, applicant support opportunities, public feedback periods, and capacity interviews. The district stated that the application was reviewed by the Charter Application Review Team ("CART"), which included internal and external reviewers trained on the State Board rubric and quality authorizing standards. MSCS reported that the amended application received ratings of "Partially Meets Standard" in Educational Program Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, Budget and Finance, and Addenda. The district stated that concerns remained regarding the academic model, student recruitment and re-engagement strategies, staffing plans, governance structures, facilities planning, and financial sustainability. According to MSCS, many of the concerns identified during the initial application review remained unresolved in the amended application. The district also highlighted existing alternative education programs and supports available for over-age, under-credited, and disengaged students, asserting that multiple pathways currently exist within the district to serve similar student populations.

In the sponsor's opening statement, Opportunity Youth Academy focused its presentation on the need to serve disconnected youth in Memphis. OYA stated that thousands of students in the Memphis area are disengaged from both school and workforce opportunities and argued that its proposed model is designed specifically to reconnect these students to educational and career pathways. The applicant described a school model centered on relationship-building, individualized learning plans, academic acceleration, workforce preparation, and wraparound supports. OYA also discussed community engagement efforts, stating that feedback gathered

⁴ T.C.A. § 49-13-108

from students and families demonstrated a desire for personalized support, strong adult relationships, and career-connected learning experiences. The applicant further discussed its governance structure, community partnerships, and support from its educational service provider, emphasizing that the proposed school would complement existing educational opportunities by serving students who have already disengaged from traditional settings.

During questioning by the Commission, district representatives were asked about the basis for the denial recommendation, the review process, demonstrated community need, the role of the sponsor's selected ESP, and the proposed academic model. MSCS explained that many of the concerns identified during review were interconnected across academics, operations, governance, and finance, and several deficiencies identified during the initial review remained unresolved in the amended application. The district further stated that its concerns regarding the ESP were not related to the provider's out-of-state location, but rather the applicant's lack of demonstrated local capacity and readiness to successfully implement the proposed model in Memphis. District representatives also discussed concerns regarding student re-engagement strategies, attendance and performance goals, and the extent to which the proposed model aligned with the Opportunity Schools framework.

The Commission then questioned the sponsor regarding its response to district feedback, recruitment and enrollment strategies, local operational capacity, governance structure, and financial sustainability. OYA explained that reviewer feedback was analyzed and addressed in revisions made throughout the amended application and maintained that updates strengthened multiple sections of the proposal. The sponsor further discussed its plan to recruit and re-engage disconnected youth through community partnerships, direct outreach, and referral networks. OYA also highlighted efforts to strengthen local capacity, including identifying a proposed school leader and developing partnerships with Memphis-based organizations. Finally, the sponsor addressed budget concerns, noting that the amended financial plan no longer relied on Charter Schools Program grant funding during the startup period and included adjustments intended to support long-term sustainability.

The public hearing concluded with closing statements by both parties and the receipt of seven in-person comments, with zero speaking in support of MSCS and seven speaking in support of Opportunity Youth Academy. The Commission also accepted written comments, and the Commission received twenty-one written comments, with zero writing in support of MSCS and twenty-one writing in support of Opportunity Youth Academy.

Analysis

State law requires the Commission to review the decision of the local board of education and determine if the application "meets or exceeds the metrics outlined in the Tennessee State

Board of Education’s application-scoring rubric and,” whether “approval of the application is in the best interests of the students, LEA, or community.”⁵ In addition, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Commission adopted the State Board of Education’s Quality Charter Authorizing Standards set forth in State Board Policy 6.111 and utilizes these standards to review charter applications received upon appeal. In making my recommendation to the Commission, I have considered the Review Committee’s Recommendation Report, the documentation submitted by both the sponsor and LEA, the arguments made by both parties at the public hearing, and the public comments received by Commission staff and conclude as follows:

The Review Committee’s report and recommendations are thorough, citing specific examples in the application and referencing information gained in the capacity interview in support of its findings. For the reasons explained in the report, I agree that the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application did not rise to the level of meeting or exceeding the standards required for approval.

I agree with the Review Committee that the educational plan partially meets the standard for approval, as there are significant gaps within the application. The sponsor has proposed to open an opportunity public charter school. The school has identified a strong mission and target population that could benefit from this option. The goal of re-engaging disconnected, often over-age and under-credited students is admirable but requires unique, detailed strategies that appear to be lacking in the application. It remains unclear how the academic model will be implemented on a daily basis. The sponsor indicated that each student would receive an individual development plan but failed to detail how these plans would be applied within its academic model and how they would produce academic achievement.

Moreover, the applicant provided little evidence of how the proposed model would work within Tennessee requirements regarding graduation and assessments. The proposed model would meet students where they are in terms of credit accumulation, but what was not clear is how the school would individualize the student’s credit accumulation while also meeting accountability expectations. Additionally, the proposed student body intends to be students of high-need who have not had successful academic experiences. However, the staffing model does not align with these student expectations. Specifically, the school states that it plans to recruit and hire mostly novice teachers who would likely be inexperienced with high-need students. In Year 1 of operation, the advocate counselor to student ratio is one to fifty, and the proposed teacher to student ratio is one to twenty-five. The proposed educational model relies heavily on intensive student support and individualized planning, but this is not reflected in the

⁵ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

staffing model.

Additionally, there are still questions outstanding related to student recruitment and enrollment. An application meets the standard where the education plan provides anticipated challenges related to the student population and a related plan for mitigating those challenges. The sponsor's identified over-age, under-credited demographic meets the statutory definition for at-risk; however, one of the considerations for this population of students is the plan to ensure these students attain the credits necessary to achieve a high school diploma as identified in the sponsor's vision. During the capacity interview, the sponsor named a RIE process – recruitment, intake, and enrollment – to address student enrollment. During the public hearing, the sponsor identified five strategies for recruitment: guidance counselors, community-based outreach, connection with youth-related agencies, direct digital outreach (e.g., social media), and referrals from peers and/or other families. These strategies were not reflected in the application. The sponsor's strategies for recruitment, in many aspects, mirror the efforts of traditional charter schools. For at-risk students, there is an increased need for intentionality to ensure that Opportunity Youth Academy complies with T.C.A. § 49-13-133, which includes maintaining a population of 75% at-risk students. When asked about how the school would keep adequate records of student at-risk status during the capacity interview, the school reiterated the intake process but did not speak to how they would monitor and maintain the 75% at-risk student body as required by law.

An application meets the standard for approval when they have a founding team with demonstrated education, experience, and skills relative to their roles. In the amended application, most of the listed individuals were a part of the proposed ESP. There was no school-level leadership team identified when the amended application was submitted to MSCS or the Commission. Since the amended application was submitted, Opportunity Youth Academy has hired Angela Joyner as its founding leader. I commend the sponsor for selecting a leader with the expertise, skill set, and, most importantly, knowledge of the local context and the Frayser community, which is necessary for a school as specialized as Opportunity Youth Academy. I believe that Ms. Joyner is an asset to Opportunity Youth Academy and the Frayser community. Since she was hired in early September, the outreach and engagement led by Ms. Joyner has generated strong interest and increased community demand. However, there is no evidence to evaluate this engagement. My analysis may have changed if the school leader had been hired closer to the beginning of the application process, and this community engagement had not recently begun. However, the updates are too late in the process to alleviate the concerns raised in my review of the record.

When reviewing the governing board, the sponsor identified the minimum number of necessary board members (i.e., three) and stated an intended regular cadence of meetings;

however, none of the named board members participated in the completion of the application. The Commission's legal relationship is with the school's governing board, and, as amended, I am unable to assess the capacity of the governing board to govern and operate Opportunity Youth Academy. Within the capacity interview, governing board members were unable to provide details of how they would hold the ESP accountable. This lack of demonstrated capacity and governance when proposing a complex school model and contracting with an ESP is a significant gap.

New start applicants faced the task of filling a funding gap due to the absence of the Charter Schools Program grant. The Opportunity Youth Academy application earmarked the CSP grant for its first two years. Since they were not awarded this grant, the sponsor stated that they have received \$200,000 in philanthropic commitments and that they will continue fundraising and applying for qualifying grants. The sponsor identified a three-pronged approach to generate funds for Opportunity Youth Academy: pursuit of federal grants, funding opportunities through workforce development, and continued philanthropic fundraising. This plan does not allow for contingencies or unanticipated costs. While I understand the foundation of the plan, it does not account for the need for immediate funding for the school to operate effectively in Year 0 as it prepares to open. The named plan included all speculative funds with nothing secured or applied for. There is little evidence of sufficient funding to support the school as reflected in its amended application. While the budget explains Opportunity Youth Academy's expenditures and anticipated costs, it lacks sufficient detail or context to meet the standard for approval. Without the CSP grant, the sponsor's budget still shows a significant gap in available funds and lacks a realistic plan to close it ahead of a Fall 2027 opening.

Any authorized public charter school is entrusted with the great responsibility of educating students and a significant amount of public funds. For these reasons, the Commission expects that only those schools that have demonstrated a high likelihood of success and meet or exceed the required criteria in all areas will be authorized.

For the reasons expounded on in this report, I recommend that the Commission deny the Opportunity Youth Academy amended application.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, and for the reasons stated in the Review Committee Recommendation Report attached hereto as **Exhibit A**, I do not believe that the decision to deny the amended application for Opportunity Youth Academy was contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or community. Therefore, I recommend that the Commission affirm the decision of the MSCS Board of Education to deny the amended application for Opportunity Youth Academy.



Tess Stovall

Tess Stovall, Executive Director
Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

October 8, 2026
Date



EXHIBIT A:
Charter Application Review Committee Recommendation Report

October 8, 2026

School Name: Opportunity Youth Academy

Sponsor: Opportunity Youth Network TN

Proposed Location of School: Memphis-Shelby County Schools

Evaluation Team:

- Ashley Davis
- Neven Holland
- Rebecca Ledebuhr
- Maggie Lund
- Tom McGrath
- Claire Seguin



This recommendation report is based on a template from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.



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Introduction

Tennessee Code Annotated (“T.C.A.”) § 49-13-108 allows the sponsor of a public charter school to appeal the denial of an application by the local board of education to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”). In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Commission shall conduct a de novo, on the record review of the proposed charter school’s application, and the Commission has adopted national and state quality authorizing standards to guide its work. As laid out in Commission Policy 3.000 – Core Authorizing Principles,¹ the Commission is committed to implementing these authorizing standards that are aligned with the core principles of charter school authorizing, including setting high standards for the approval of charter schools in its portfolio.

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Commission adopted Commission Policy 2.000 – Charter School Appeals. The Commission has outlined the charter school appeal process to ensure the well-being and interests of students are the fundamental value informing all Commission actions and decisions. The Commission publishes clear timelines and expectations for applicants, engages highly competent teams of internal and external evaluators to review all applications, and maintains rigorous criteria for approval of a charter school. In addition, the Commission plans to evaluate its work annually to ensure its alignment to national and state standards for quality authorizing and implements improvement when necessary.

The Commission’s charter application review process is outlined in T.C.A. § 49-13-108, Commission Policy 2.000 – Charter School Appeals, and Commission Policy 2.100 – Application Review. The Commission assembled a charter application review committee comprised of highly qualified internal and external evaluators with relevant and diverse expertise to evaluate each application. The Commission provided training to all committee members to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all applications.

Overview of the Evaluation Process

The Commission’s charter application Review Committee developed this recommendation report based on three key stages of review:

1. **Evaluation of the Proposal:** The Review Committee independently reviewed the amended charter application, attachments, and budget submitted by the sponsor. After an independent review, the Review Committee collectively identified the main strengths, concerns, and weaknesses as well as developed specific questions for the applicant in the

¹ All [Commission rules and policies](#) may be found on the [Commission's website](#).

four sections of the application: Educational Program Design and Capacity, Operations Design and Capacity, Budget and Finance, and Addenda.

2. **Capacity Interview:** Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the Review Committee conducted a ninety-minute interview with the sponsor, members of the governing board, and identified school leadership to address the concerns, weaknesses, and questions identified in the application, and to assess the capacity to execute the application's overall plan.
3. **Consensus Judgment:** At the conclusion of the review of the application and the capacity interview, the committee submitted a final rubric and developed a consensus regarding a rating for each section of the application.

This recommendation report includes the following information:

1. **Summary of the Application:** A brief description of the applicant's proposed academic, operations, financial plans, and addenda.
2. **Summary of the Evaluation:** A brief summary of the overall recommendation for the application.
3. **Analysis of each section of the application:** An analysis of the major sections of the application and the capacity of the team to execute the plan as described in the application.
 - a. **Educational Program Design and Capacity:** School overview; school mission and model; anticipated student population; family and community engagement and support; school culture and discipline; curriculum and instruction; special populations; student assessment and evaluation; educational program capacity; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - b. **Operations Design and Capacity:** Governance; staffing; facilities; transportation; health and safety; insurance; food service; start-up plan; operations capacity; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - c. **Budget and Finance:** planning and budget worksheet; operating budget; budget and finance capacity; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - d. **Addenda:** (c) supplemental questions for sponsors contracting with a third-party education service provider ("ESP"), including a charter management organization ("CMO"), (f) supplemental questions for sponsors applying to operate an opportunity public charter school.



The Commission's charter application Review Committee utilized the Tennessee State Board of Education's Charter School Application Scoring Rubric ("rubric"), which is used by all local boards of education when evaluating an application. The rubric states that authorizers should adopt the State Board of Education's ("SBE") Quality Authorizing Standards, which establishes rigorous decision-making criteria. Specifically, SBE Policy 6.111 states a "quality authorizer requires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a demonstration of community support, a solvent and sustainable budget and contingency financial plans, a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the model for the target student population, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities in all phases of the school's development, and clear evidence of the applicant's capacity to execute its plan successfully. An application that merits a recommendation for approval should satisfy each of these criteria."²

Each individual question will be rated "Meets," "Partially Meets," or "Does Not Meet." The rubric provides guidance within each question to aid reviewers in determining the extent to which each response meets the standard. Each major subsection will then be assigned an overall rating of "Meets," "Partially Meets," or "Does Not Meet" by averaging the ratings for each individual question within the subsection. Section summaries will then be determined by averaging subsection ratings.³

² Tennessee State Board of Education Policy 6.111

³ Tennessee State Board of Education's Charter School Application Scoring Rubric, pg. 3

Summary of the Application

School Name: Opportunity Youth Academy

Sponsor: Opportunity Youth Network TN

Proposed Location of School: Memphis-Shelby County Schools

Mission: Our mission is to help students ages sixteen through twenty-one in grades ninth through twelfth to master the essential skills crucial for success in postsecondary education, career, and community leadership within a global society.⁴

Number of Schools Currently in Operation by Sponsor: There are no schools currently in operation by the sponsor in Tennessee. The sponsor intends to contract with Opportunity Youth Network in Newark that currently manages two opportunity schools in New Jersey.

Proposed Enrollment:⁵

Grade Level	Year 1: 2027-2028	Year 2: 2028-2029	Year 3: 2029-2030	Year 4: 2030-2031	Year 5: 2031-2032	At Capacity:
9	100	175	250	275	300	300
10						
11						
12						
Totals	100	175	250	275	300	300

Brief Description of the Application

The sponsor, Opportunity Youth Network TN, is proposing to open an opportunity public charter school in Memphis-Shelby County Schools and serve students in ninth through twelfth grades. The school, Opportunity Youth Academy ("OYA"), is a new-start school and would be the first school for the sponsor. The proposed school will be organized under Opportunity Youth Network TN and contract directly with Opportunity Youth Network, also referred to in the application as YouthBuild Newark, as its ESP. The school intends to operate in the Frayser neighborhood of Memphis to serve students ages sixteen through twenty-one who have been previously disengaged from traditional schooling and are behind in credit accumulation.⁶ The school proposes to offer a fundamentally different educational approach to help students

⁴ Opportunity Youth Academy Amended Application, pg. 9

⁵ Opportunity Youth Academy Amended Application, pg. 26

⁶ Opportunity Youth Academy Application, pg. 7

achieve their postsecondary goals through five interconnected components that are centered around love, including education, career pathways, support services, leadership development, and alumni support.

The application states that the proposed school will be governed by a local governing board in Memphis. In Year 0, Opportunity Youth Academy has budgeted \$375,000 in revenue from the Charter Schools Program (“CSP”) Grant and Opportunity Youth Network, ESP and projects \$322,880 in expenses for the school. In Year 1, Opportunity Youth Academy projects the school will have \$2,010,000 in revenue and \$1,981,444.20 in expenses, resulting in a balance of \$28,555.80. By Year 5, the school projects to have \$4,330,000 in revenue and \$4,045,025.76 in expenses, resulting in a positive ending fund balance of \$284,874.24.⁷ The school anticipates that 92% of the student population will qualify as economically disadvantaged, 18% of the student population will be students with disabilities, and 10% of the student population will be English learners.⁸

⁷ Opportunity Youth Academy Amended Budget

⁸ Opportunity Youth Academy Amended Application, pg. 27

Summary of the Evaluation

The Review Committee recommends the denial of the amended application for Opportunity Youth Academy because the applicant failed to provide sufficient evidence in the academic, operational, financial, and addenda sections to demonstrate that the application meets the required criteria of the rubric.

The applicant's Educational Program Design and Capacity partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding enrollment viability, implementation feasibility, and the applicant's demonstrated capacity to execute the proposed educational model. While the applicant presents a compelling mission focused on serving disconnected and at-risk youth through personalized learning, intensive student supports, workforce development, and individualized case management, the application does not provide sufficient evidence that the proposed student population can be successfully recruited and enrolled. The applicant relies heavily on broad citywide data and references a successful model implemented in New Jersey, but provides limited evidence of community-specific demand, formalized recruitment partnerships, or a clear strategy for adapting the model to the Memphis and Frayser context. Additionally, the application lacks sufficient detail regarding how personalized learning, mastery-based instruction, and individualized supports will function in practice, particularly for students with varying academic deficiencies and credit needs. There is insufficient evidence regarding whether the proposed staffing structure can realistically deliver the intensive interventions, counseling, and individualized support services promised by the model. Collectively, these weaknesses demonstrate that the applicant has not yet established sufficient evidence of enrollment viability or implementation capacity necessary to ensure successful academic outcomes.

The applicant's Operations Plan and Capacity partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding governance development, staffing readiness, operational execution, and the applicant's preparedness to serve a highly vulnerable student population. While the governing board demonstrates commitment to the mission and the applicant has identified support from its ESP, several key governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and operational systems remain underdeveloped. The application does not clearly articulate how local leadership will oversee critical functions, including instructional supervision, compliance, student support services, data management, and professional development, particularly during the pre-opening period and the early years of operation. Additionally, critical staffing positions are inconsistently reflected across the application, budget, and startup plans, raising concerns about implementation feasibility. Recruitment strategies rely heavily on traditional pipelines despite the specialized expertise required to serve students with significant academic and social-emotional needs. Furthermore, transportation plans remain largely conceptual despite

transportation being a critical component for successfully re-engaging at-risk youth. Taken together, these concerns indicate that the applicant has not demonstrated sufficient operational readiness or internal capacity to implement the proposed school model effectively.

The applicant's Budget and Finance partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding financial sustainability, startup funding, and key budget assumptions. The proposed financial model relies heavily on anticipated revenue sources that remain unsecured, including a CSP grant that was not awarded. Although the applicant identified alternative fundraising and grant-seeking strategies during the capacity interview, these sources remain speculative and do not adequately address the resulting startup funding gap. Additional concerns exist regarding the sufficiency of budgeted facility renovation costs and the long-term viability of staffing assumptions that appear to depend on hiring predominantly novice educators. The application does not adequately demonstrate how the school would absorb unexpected facility expenses, maintain competitive compensation, or retain staff over time while serving a student population that requires intensive support. As a result, the committee found insufficient evidence that the proposed budget provides a sustainable financial foundation for long-term operation.

The applicant's Addenda partially meets the standard due to concerns regarding replication, oversight, compliance, and student recruitment. While the applicant highlights the ESP's success serving opportunity youth in New Jersey, the application provides limited evidence demonstrating how the model will be effectively adapted to the specific needs of Memphis and the Frayser community. The application also lacks sufficient detail on the ESP selection process, oversight mechanisms, accountability measures, and the organizational capacity needed to support expansion into Tennessee. Additionally, the applicant has not adequately demonstrated how it will comply with the specialized enrollment verification and reporting requirements associated with opportunity public charter schools, including maintaining the required percentage of at-risk students. Concerns also remain regarding the absence of formal recruitment partnerships, enrollment pipelines, and documented commitments necessary to support projected enrollment targets. Collectively, these deficiencies indicate that the applicant has not provided sufficient evidence that the model can be successfully replicated, appropriately overseen, or sustained within the proposed operating environment.

Summary of Section Ratings

In accordance with the Tennessee State Board of Education's charter application scoring rubric, applications that do not meet or exceed the standard in all sections will be deemed not ready for approval and strengths in one area of the application do not negate weaknesses in other areas. Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on



having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. The Review Committee's consensus ratings for each section of the application are as follows:

Sections	Ratings
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard
Addenda	Partially Meets Standard

Analysis of the Educational Program Design and Capacity

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Educational Program Design and Capacity partially meets the standard. The application presents a clearly defined mission focused on serving disconnected and at-risk youth through personalized supports, career pathways, and intensive case management. However, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the feasibility of implementation, the adequacy of the recruitment strategy, and the applicant's capacity to execute the educational model successfully. Although the application articulates a compelling vision for re-engaging students who have experienced academic disruption in Memphis, the committee found insufficient evidence to demonstrate how disengaged youth in Memphis will be reached and enrolled in the school. The application frequently references a proven educational approach developed by the education service provider in New Jersey. However, the application provides limited evidence of student outcomes, replication success, or specific examples of how the model will be adapted to the Memphis context, and, more specifically, to the Frayser community in which the school intends to locate.

While the application presents compelling data regarding disconnected youth in Memphis, workforce readiness needs, and community challenges, the applicant relied heavily on broad citywide statistics and assumptions rather than community-specific evidence demonstrating enrollment demand within the proposed location area. The application included some evidence of surveys, stakeholder meetings, and community conversations, but there was insufficient evidence that previously disengaged students and families intend to enroll in the school. During the capacity interview, the sponsor discussed additional partnerships pursued, as well as more specific community engagement efforts for the intended Memphis location. However, there was no evidence provided of this engagement within the application or memorandum of understanding ("MOU") demonstrating solidified partnerships that would result in student enrollment. Given the unique enrollment requirements of an opportunity public charter school and the challenges of recruiting chronically disengaged youth, the proposed enrollment targets outlined in the application are not supported by sufficient evidence or community demand.

The application outlines personalized learning through individualized learning plans for students, mastery-based instruction, students learning at their own pace, and flexible scheduling. However, sufficient detail is lacking in how these elements function together in practice. It remains unclear how students with vastly different academic backgrounds, credit deficiencies, and instructional needs will be grouped, scheduled, and supported by the proposed staffing model. Similarly, in the application and during the capacity interview, the sponsor

provided a limited explanation of how mastery-based instruction will align with Tennessee graduation requirements, end-of-course assessments, and accountability measures within the framework for opportunity public charter schools. During the capacity interview, the applicant provided additional explanations regarding intake and student placement processes but offered limited detail on how academic gaps will be adequately addressed within the outlined daily schedule and how the school differs from other credit recovery options in the area.

Further, the application outlines extensive student support services, including advocate counselors, individualized development plans, counseling services, intervention supports, and workforce preparation opportunities. However, it is not evident that the proposed staffing structure can deliver these services with fidelity. In Year 1, the advocate counselor to student ratio is one to fifty, and the proposed teacher to student ratio is one to twenty-five. The proposed educational model relies heavily on intensive student support and individualized planning. Yet the application does not consistently demonstrate how these staffing ratios affect teachers' capacity and the feasibility of implementing the promised highly individualized instructional model.

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant presents a compelling mission focused on serving a student population that is underserved by traditional educational settings. The proposed model demonstrates an understanding of the academic, social-emotional, and workforce development challenges commonly experienced by disconnected youth. The application outlines a comprehensive support framework for students and a strong school culture plan. The school intends to build a student-centered culture focused on belonging, relationships, leadership development, restorative practices, and trauma-informed supports. The proposed culture model aligns closely with the needs of the target population and includes multiple opportunities for student voice, individualized support, and goal setting. Additionally, the applicant demonstrates an understanding of the legal and compliance requirements related to special education services, English learner services, attendance monitoring, and student support systems.

Another strength that was identified during the capacity interview with the applicant was the identification of a local school leader in Memphis to serve as the head of school/principal. This school leader stated that deeper engagement has begun in the Frayser neighborhood of Memphis, and that partnerships are being pursued with the juvenile court system, Agape, and other Memphis organizations that serve at-risk youth. While these actions are commendable and will likely help in the student recruitment process, evidence of engagement and MOUs for partnerships was not included within the application and, therefore, cannot be verified as evidence. Overall, while the review committee recognizes the strength of the mission and the



applicant's commitment to serving at-risk youth in Memphis, there is insufficient evidence regarding enrollment viability and instructional implementation.

Analysis of the Operations Plan and Capacity

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Operations Plan and Capacity partially meets the standard because there is insufficient evidence regarding implementation capacity, local governance and operational readiness, and how the plan is tailored to serve at-risk youth.

While the proposed governing board demonstrates a commitment to the outlined mission, several fundamental governance structures are still being developed, including governance policies, committee structures, board reporting mechanisms, and complaint procedures. Additionally, during the capacity interview, the governing board did not clearly articulate a framework or system for evaluating the effectiveness of the ESP and the school leader, as required by the State Board of Education's scoring rubric. As outlined in the application, the school's operational success also depends heavily on the ESP and future hires, rather than on an established Memphis-based leadership team. At the time of application submission, no school leader had been identified. While a founding principal was later identified during the capacity interview, the leader's credentials and background were not provided to the review committee for evaluation as part of the application review process. Although the applicant described support structures and technical assistance from the ESP, the ultimate operational responsibility will rest with a small number of local leaders. The application does not clearly articulate how key functions, for example, instructional supervision, professional development, student supports, data management, and compliance monitoring, will be executed locally during the pre-opening period and early years of operation.

The staffing plan also raises concerns about the feasibility of implementation. Several critical positions central to the proposed model are either delayed beyond the opening year or inconsistently reflected across the narrative, budget, and startup plan. Positions such as the enrollment coordinator, career and technical education ("CTE") coordinator, and instructional supervisor are identified as essential components of the school's strategy but are not consistently budgeted or planned for immediate implementation. In addition, the school intends to serve students with significant academic deficiencies, interrupted educational histories, and substantial social-emotional needs. Successfully serving this population requires highly skilled teachers in intervention, restorative practices, and differentiated instruction. However, the recruitment plan relies heavily on traditional charter-sector teacher recruitment pipelines and novice teacher programs without adequately addressing how the school will compete in a market already experiencing staffing shortages. Although the applicant identifies professional development and coaching structures, this training alone may not be robust enough to serve

this population, particularly when the leadership positions responsible for delivering that support have many other outlined responsibilities or are not added to the staff until after Year 1.

The Review Committee also engaged the sponsor during the capacity interview regarding transportation concerns. The applicant appropriately acknowledged transportation as a critical support for at-risk youth and expressed commitment to providing transportation services. However, the operational components of the transportation plan remain largely conceptual, with the applicant mentioning the potential use of public transportation and shuttles in addition to the buses outlined in the application. It is unclear how these additional transportation costs would be covered. While providing transportation for all students at a charter school is not required by law, transportation concerns are amplified given the target population, many of whom may face transportation barriers that have contributed to disengagement from school.

Strengths Identified by the Committee

A strength of the application is that the school will receive consistent support from the ESP, Opportunity Youth Network, for many operational items, including professional development and leadership support. The application's facilities plan identifies a potential school location that can serve the projected enrollment and support the proposed model. The applicant aims to co-locate with another Memphis school and has engaged architectural and facility planning partners and conducted preliminary site exploration. The applicant demonstrates awareness of statutory and operational requirements related to transportation, school safety, health services, food service, and insurance. The governing board also meets the requirements of the State Board of Education's scoring rubric and includes members with diverse expertise in the Memphis area.

Analysis of the Budget and Finance

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Budget and Finance partially meets the standard because the proposed financial model relies heavily on revenue sources that remain uncertain. Most notably, the applicant did not receive the anticipated Charter Schools Program startup grant that was included in the original budget assumptions. During the capacity interview, the applicant acknowledged a significant startup funding gap resulting from the failure to receive the anticipated funds. While the applicant discussed a three-pronged approach during the capacity interview to pursue federal grants, workforce development funding opportunities, and philanthropic fundraising, this is speculative and not committed funding. The applicant reported securing \$200,000 in philanthropic funding during the capacity interview; however, these startup funds will be insufficient to cover the expenses outlined in the budget.

Additional concerns exist regarding the budget assumptions related to facilities, food service, and staffing. The applicant outlines colocation with another school in Memphis's Frayser neighborhood; however, the budget appears to allocate insufficient funding for renovation costs. It is unclear how the school would cover the costs of any tenant improvements or facility renovations if costs are higher than anticipated. Additionally, the applicant outlines personnel costs within the budget aligned to starting salaries for teachers. When asked about this during the capacity interview, the applicant stated that they would likely hire teachers who are new to the profession. However, the applicant did not speak to how they would ensure that more veteran teachers are appropriately compensated within the budget. It is also unclear how the salary structure, as outlined in the application for more novice professionals, would support retaining teachers year over year, particularly given the nuances of serving at-risk youth.

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant submitted a complete multi-year budget package, including planning-year projections, planned enrollment scenarios, and minimum enrollment scenarios. The budget narrative generally aligns with the proposed educational model and includes projected expenditures for staffing, transportation, student supports, facilities, and instructional programming. The proposed financial management structure includes oversight by the governing board, a finance committee, school leadership, and external financial service providers. Contracted support from GT3 Group provides expertise in accounting, payroll, reporting, and compliance functions.



The applicant's budget outlines that they will also receive \$125,000 in startup funding from Opportunity Youth Network, the ESP. During the capacity interview, the applicant provided further details to the review committee regarding this funding, stating that it was grant-like in nature and would not need to be repaid to the organization over time.

Analysis of Addenda (C) – Sponsors contracting with a third-party ESP, (F) – Sponsors applying to operate an opportunity public charter school

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Addenda partially meets the standard because the applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed model can be successfully replicated in Memphis. The application relies heavily on outcomes and practices observed in New Jersey but provides limited evidence explaining how the model will be adapted to the specific needs, demographics, and educational landscape of the proposed Frayser community of Memphis. Additionally, the application provides limited evidence regarding the organizational capacity of the ESP's expansion into Tennessee. The applicant did not adequately provide information in the addenda regarding the staffing infrastructure, operational systems, and oversight mechanisms that will support effective implementation across multiple states. The application also did not provide information on how the school's governing board selected the ESP and how it would hold the ESP accountable as a contracted service provider, as outlined in the State Board of Education's scoring rubric criteria. During the capacity interview, the sponsor noted that the ESP was chosen for its proven track record of serving opportunity youth in New Jersey, but provided no further details on expectations, monitoring, or evaluation of the ESP's success.

Additionally, opportunity public charter schools have additional enrollment documentation requirements for at-risk youth and must maintain an enrollment of 75% at-risk youth to remain operating as an opportunity public charter school. The application did not outline sufficient plans to remain in compliance with the reporting requirements and documentation of the at-risk status of students. This question was also asked during the capacity interview, and the applicant discussed intake procedures but did not fully articulate how eligibility records would be maintained and monitored over time. While the application identifies a significant number of disconnected youth in Memphis, it does not provide a sufficiently detailed strategy to consistently identify, recruit, enroll, and retain enough eligible students to satisfy opportunity public charter school requirements. During both the application review and the capacity interview, the applicant referenced future partnerships, outreach efforts, and community engagement activities; however, the application provided no formal agreements, commitments, or recruitment pipelines to support these claims.

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant presents relevant experience serving at-risk youth through an established ESP in New Jersey and proposes a school model intentionally designed to address the needs of



disengaged students. The ESP outlines a model incorporating advocate counselors, individualized development plans, workforce preparation, leadership development, case management, social-emotional supports, career pathways, and post-secondary planning. The application details data indicating the success of the ESP across the two active New Jersey schools, including a successful renewal, academic growth, student stabilization, and low suspension rate. The application addenda also outline strong graduation rates and high levels of postsecondary and career success for the existing schools in New Jersey.

In terms of serving at-risk youth as an opportunity public charter school, the application also outlines an individualized case management structure to provide ongoing support for students through counseling, attendance interventions, academic monitoring, and post-secondary planning, reflecting a commitment to re-engaging students who have previously experienced educational disruption.



Evaluation Team

Ashley Davis is an author, educator, and nonprofit founder. She received a dual Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Communication from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Science in Digital Media from Columbia University. Ashley has more than 16 years of experience in education, serving as a Lead Teacher, Literacy Coordinator, Principal and Teacher Residency Director. She now serves as the Program Director for Kifani Kids Charitable Organization, a Memphis, TN-based nonprofit that engages early readers through place-based learning and as a partner for Kifani Press, a children's book publisher.

Neven Holland is an educator and Ph.D. student in education at the UCLA School of Education and Information Studies. He began his career as a resident teacher with the Memphis Teacher Residency, serving at Aspire Hanley Elementary—a charter school in the Achievement School District. He went on to spend nearly a decade as a fourth-grade teacher at Treadwell Elementary with Memphis-Shelby County Schools. In addition to his doctoral studies, Neven serves as a graduate student researcher on a school leadership project focused on preparing leaders to build more effective schools for students and communities. He is also a mathematics content reviewer for EdReports, where he critiques and evaluates instructional materials. As a freelance writer, Neven also contributes to Edutopia and has had his work featured in Education Week, where he writes about K–12 educational issues. His dedication to teaching was recognized nationally by the White House and the National Science Foundation when he was selected as a 2022 Presidential Awardee for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for Tennessee.

Rebecca Ledebuhr is the Data and Accountability Coordinator at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Before taking on her role at the Charter Commission, Rebecca spent fourteen years working in public schools in North Carolina and Tennessee. Most recently, she served as an instructional coach for mathematics at an MNPS public charter school. Rebecca has served on the Nashville Public Education Foundation's and Mayor's Teacher Cabinet, as a mentor teacher for the Nashville Teacher Residency, and as a Tennessee Educator Fellow for the State Collaborative on Reforming Education ("SCORE"). Rebecca holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Religion from James Madison University.

Maggie Lund is the Deputy Director of Authorizing at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Additionally, she serves as an adjunct professor in the Lipscomb College of Education Master's Program, teaching Planning, Instruction, and Assessment and Building Classroom Communities. Prior to her role at the Charter Commission, Maggie served as a school administrator at a Nashville public charter school. Maggie was a Teach for America corps member and served as an 8th grade teacher in a charter school for four years. Maggie holds a B.A. in Business Administration and Marketing from Loyola University New Orleans, a Doctor of



Education degree, and a Master of Education degree with a specialization in English Language Learning from Lipscomb University. Her dissertation research focused on Restorative Justice Practices and school culture. Most recently, her research article, Mindsets Matter for Equitable Discipline was published in the Middle School Journal.

Tom McGrath is the Manager of Grants and Fiscal Monitoring at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Before joining the Charter Commission, Tom served as the Manager of Charter Grants at the Tennessee Department of Education where he administered startup and facilities grant programs supporting the growth and sustainability of charter schools across the state. Tom began his career in education teaching middle school mathematics and computer science in Nashville charter schools for 6 years. He earned a B.A. in Philosophy and Cinema and Media Arts from Vanderbilt University.

Claire Seguin is currently serving as the Federal Programs Coordinator at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Prior to joining the Commission, Claire spent thirteen years working with special populations and school administration in K-8 charter schools in Nashville. Claire holds a BA in Sociology and Disaster Science Management from Louisiana State University, a Master of Education with specializations in Special Education and English Language Learning from Lipscomb University, and graduate certificates in Autism Studies and Applied Behavior Analysis. She has contributed to published research on the impact of parental involvement on academic achievement and currently provides advocacy support for families of students with disabilities in public schools.