



August 6, 2026

Dear Executive Director Stovall,

Music City Academy respectfully requests this appeal because approving the school is in the best interest of Nashville's students, families, and community. Music City Academy was founded on the belief that every child deserves access to a high-quality public school where they are known, challenged, and prepared for success beyond graduation. Our model uses athletics as a catalyst for engagement, career-connected learning, and leadership development, built around four pathways, Sport and Human Performance, Therapeutic Services, Emergency Services, and Audio/Visual Production, that align with Nashville's fast-growing sports and event economy while holding students to rigorous academic expectations. Our goal is not to produce collegiate athletes; it is to graduate students who are academically prepared, career ready, and equipped to lead in whatever profession they choose.

Music City Academy Is Operationally Ready to Open

Although the Board's denial rested entirely on the district's fiscal impact summary and did not cite any deficiency in Music City Academy's academic program, which the review team rated Meets Standard, we want to directly address the operational questions the review team did raise.

On executive leadership, the review team noted a lack of clarity about which position would serve as the school's executive leader. That structure is clear: Dr. Kevin Dyson serves as Founding CEO and Executive Director, with Chief Academic Officer Christina McDonald reporting to him on all academic matters. Dr. Dyson brings nineteen years in education, including twelve years in secondary school administration, most recently as Principal of Centennial High School in Williamson County and previously as Principal of Grassland Middle School. He holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and two master's degrees from Trevecca Nazarene University. Before his career in education, Dr. Dyson played six seasons in the NFL as a first-round draft pick, an athletic career that directly informs the discipline, resilience, and team-first culture Music City Academy is built to teach. Christina McDonald brings over a decade of experience leading school turnarounds and launches, including leading Independence Academy from a D to a B state accountability rating in three years and founding Reimagine Prep, the first charter school in Mississippi. She has extensive start-up, enrollment, and academic experiences that will launch the school strongly. This leadership team is further supported by a founding board with collective expertise in law, finance, health, and workforce development.

On facilities: Music City Academy has identified Tennessee State University as its athletic facilities partner and is actively working to finalize that agreement based on the final location of the school. We recognize this relationship had not yet converted into a signed agreement at the



time of the review, and we are continuing to negotiate the terms necessary to complete it ahead of opening.

On staffing, the General Manager role, which will oversee day-to-day business and operational functions, has not yet been filled. That is a function of timing, not planning. Music City Academy cannot responsibly commit to additional payroll before authorization is secured, and hiring a General Manager against a still-pending application would be fiscally irresponsible. Once approved, filling this role will be an immediate priority, and its responsibilities are already well defined in the school's start-up plan.

The Fiscal Analysis Underlying the Denial Does Not Hold Up

MNPS's fiscal case assumes the per-pupil funds following students to Music City Academy are money the district loses outright. The Tennessee Attorney General's 2013 opinion on the Public Charter Schools Act rejects that premise: funding follows the student it was appropriated for, and the Act doesn't require a district to backfill spending beyond what it's already spending.

Correcting the district's analysis for that premise, plus two data errors, shrinks its own projected impact from \$1,671,012 at opening, and \$6,684,049 at capacity (0.116% and 0.465% of the \$1.4B budget) to \$401,180 at opening, and \$504,593 at capacity (0.028% and 0.035% of the \$1.4B budget). Specifically, the district's model counted all per-pupil revenue as lost, but its own records show more than 60% of TISA funding moves with the student while only 35% of per-pupil costs are actually fixed, the rest scale down as enrollment does. MNPS also assumed all 480 seats come from current MNPS students, ignoring the school's projection that 15-20% will come from charter school, private and homeschool families generating no MNPS revenue today.

MCA's potential impact is a fraction of a fraction of the district's total budget, which has consequently grown every year through a period of decreasing enrollment. On top of this, the district's own capital plan directs new construction to schools it projects will stay underutilized. Meanwhile, MCA's privately financed facility will draw nothing from the capital or debt service funds it gets no share of.

There Is Demonstrated Demand for This Model

Over 500 community members have engaged directly with Music City Academy through more than 257 family surveys and additional community conversations. 204 families have already expressed interest in enrolling their children. Only 7.6% of families surveyed say Nashville's current public high schools are meeting their needs. 53.5% say their schools are not offering high-quality sports programs, 51.8% say their schools are not providing sufficient health and wellness support, and 48.8% say their schools are not effectively offering rigorous academics. Families are already acting on that dissatisfaction: 23% of Davidson County students now attend



charter schools and 21% attend private schools, a clear signal that a meaningful share of Nashville families do not believe their assigned public school is meeting their child's needs.

As one prospective family put it, *"I believe that Music City Academy will be an incredible fit for the greater Nashville community because it reflects the very heart of what Nashville stands for... Creativity, Culture, and Connection."* Families are not offering abstract support for school choice. They are asking, in documented and significant numbers, for the specific school Music City Academy is designed to be.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission to reverse the decision of the Metro Nashville Board of Education and approve Music City Academy's application. Approving Music City Academy will expand opportunity, strengthen Nashville's workforce pipeline, increase educational choice, and give students a rigorous academic environment where passion becomes purpose and potential becomes achievement.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your continued commitment to serving Tennessee's students, families, and communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Kevin Dyson
Founding CEO and Executive Director
Music City Academy