

**DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1
BOARD OF EDUCATION
RESOLUTION DENYING CHARTER APPLICATIONS
FROM ALEXANDRIA SCHOOL OF INNOVATION**

Whereas, on March 15, 2023, Alexandria School of Innovation (“ASI”) submitted charter school applications to the Douglas County School District RE-1 (“District”) for the formation of four schools to operate within the geographic boundaries of the District beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, including campuses at Sterling Ranch, Ridgegate, Crystal Valley, and Highlands Ranch; and

Whereas, on March 29, 2023 the charter applications from ASI were deemed complete pursuant to C.R.S. § 22-30.5-107(1)(c); and

Whereas, on April 18, 2023, the District’s Charter Application Review Team (CART) interviewed ASI founder Judy Brannberg regarding the charter applications (“capacity interview”); and

Whereas, on April 20, 2023, the District sent additional questions to ASI regarding the charter applications, and responses to those additional questions were provided to the District on April 27, 2023; and

Whereas, on May 9, 2023, pursuant to C.R.S. § 22-30.5-107(2), and at a regular and publicly noticed meeting, Ms. Brannberg, on behalf of ASI, presented to the District Board of Education on ASI’s charter applications, and the Board heard public comment regarding the applications, but only from Ms. Brannberg; and

Whereas, on May 23, 2023, pursuant to C.R.S. § 22-30.5-107(2), the District Board of Education considered (1) the applications from ASI, including supplemental information provided by the applicant, (2) the presentation by the applicant from May 9, 2023, (3) any public comment from the community regarding the applications, (4) the May 19, 2023 recommendation from District staff, including recommendations from the District’s Choice Programming Office, CART, and the District Cabinet to the Board of Education regarding the applications, (5) the Charter Schools Act, and (6) District policies and regulations, including Policies LBD and LBD-R and the Charter Procedures Manual.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of Douglas County School District R-1 that the Board of Education finds that **denial** of the applications from Alexandria School of Innovation is in the best interests of the District, its students, and the community, and the applications are hereby denied for the following reasons:

A. ASI is not financially viable.

ASI proposes extremely ambitious and expensive programming and facilities but has identified no reasonable means of meeting its sizable cost obligations.

ASI proposes to open four different elaborate campuses in its first year, starting with grades K-5 and scaling to K-12 within four years. ASI projects the following budget and student enrollment for each of its four campuses:

- **ASI Ridgeway, Sterling Ranch, and Highlands Ranch:** For each campus, projected enrollment of 894 in Year 1 and 1,952 in Year 5; projected expenses of \$9.3 million in Year 1 and \$22.79 million in Year 5;
- **ASI Crystal Valley:** Projected enrollment of over 500 in Year 1 and 976 in Year 5; projected expenses of \$5 million in Year 1 and \$11.7 million in Year 5;

ASI has not provided any letters of intent from prospective students, meaning it has not demonstrated any plausible per-pupil funding, which reflects the vast majority of ASI's projected revenue. ASI's founder, Judy Brannberg, admitted several times during the application review process that no effort to date has been made to secure letters of intent or to recruit students for the school. ASI has budgeted for income through federal grants, but the applicant has not demonstrated that these potential grants are viable. ASI has not identified any potential sources of private funding to make up its funding shortfall.

In its application, its capacity interview, and its presentation to the Board of Education on May 9, 2023, ASI admitted that it proposes to meet its cost obligations solely through a \$1.6 billion damage award—amounting to twice the annual budget for the entire District—that it hopes to obtain through litigation against the District for alleged civil and criminal wrongdoing, which the District firmly denies. ASI spent nearly all of its 30-minute presentation to the Board of Education on May 9 detailing its allegations against the District and other entities, some claims going back nearly ten years, and spent very little time discussing the merits of its charter application. ASI has not demonstrated any legal or factual basis for litigation damages or that funding a school through speculative litigation damages is a feasible funding strategy.

B. There is no demonstrated community support for ASI.

ASI has provided no evidence of community support for one school, let alone four different campuses. ASI submitted no letters of support for the school, or, as noted, letters of intent from families who might enroll at ASI. No community members, aside from Ms. Brannberg, publicly commented about the school. ASI has held no community meetings to promote the school. There is no evidence that parents or community groups were involved in the formation of the school. All letters of support from community partners are four or five years old.

C. ASI has not demonstrated that it has or will have an appropriate or legally compliant governance structure.

ASI has identified five individuals, including Ms. Judy Brannberg, as founding board members of the school. But aside from Ms. Brannberg, none of these people have participated in the application process or otherwise communicated with District staff concerning this application. ASI asserts in its application that all founding board members have signed a Board Member Agreement, but no signed agreements have been provided.

ASI also fundamentally shifted its proposed governance structure midway through the application process. In the application, ASI stated that there would be one board for both ASI and its embedded John Dewey Institute (JDI), even though JDI would be a separate school and has submitted a separate charter application. When confronted with questions about this structure, ASI changed course and asserted that each school (ASI and JDI) would have a separate board, but ASI has refused to identify who would serve on ASI's board and JDI's board, respectively, and who, if anyone, would serve on those boards aside from the five people listed in the application (who, as mentioned have not participated in the application process).

Moreover, ASI has purposefully structured its founding board such that parents of students at its school will not be able to serve on the board in the first year of the schools' existence, when parent participation is most critical. Ms. Brannberg stated during the capacity interview that she would "change that," but has not explained how that structure would be changed.

Further, ASI proposes that, if its application is approved, Ms. Brannberg will leave the board of ASI (and JDI) and assume the role of CEO of the charter management organization, Lighthouse on a Hill ("Lighthouse"), which ASI intends to retain to manage its schools. This arrangement creates the risk that members of the charter boards, who were seated by Ms. Brannberg, will not be sufficiently independent from Lighthouse.

D. There are no feasible facility options.

ASI proposes to construct elaborate campuses with state-of-the-art facilities, including an artificial intelligence laboratory (ASI Ridgegate) and a planetarium and observatory (ASI-Sterling Ranch). ASI has not identified a plan to fund or build these facilities or demonstrated that it even conducted a thorough assessment of facility needs. ASI has not secured any land or property for its campuses, nor has it taken any meaningful steps to do so.

ASI demands that the District "donate" the land it has designated to build its schools at Sterling Ranch, Crystal Valley, and Ridgegate as a remedy for alleged civil and criminal wrongdoing against its founder, Ms. Brannberg. The District denies any such wrongdoing, and ASI has not shown any legal or factual basis to obtain this type of remedy. Further, the District does not own Sterling Ranch, so it cannot donate that land. For the Highlands Ranch location, ASI demands that the leaders of STEM School Highlands Ranch, a District charter school, return that

school to Ms. Brannberg so she can change the name to ASI School of Innovation Highlands Ranch. The District has no authority to do this, and the District denies that it breached Ms. Brannberg's settlement agreement.

E. ASI has not demonstrated that it can adequately implement the ambitious educational programming that it proposes.

ASI provides an extensive list of courses that it hopes to offer at its campuses but has not adequately explained how it will accomplish its ambitious educational program, including how data will be used to drive instruction, how the courses will align with Colorado academic standards, or how ASI intends to hire, train, and maintain staff to teach its courses and appropriately serve its students.

ASI says that it will require significant professional development for its teachers, but it does not explain how it will fit this development time into the instructional school day and within teacher contract hours.

ASI emphasizes its science, technology, engineering, and math focus but does not explain how it will attract the large number of teachers with experience and qualifications in these fields to teach the courses it hopes to offer. There was also no clear plan offered for recruiting and hiring school and building leaders. ASI proposes to pay staff higher-than-market salaries, which is noble but not realistic given that it has not presented a viable budget.

ASI does not adequately explain how it will identify, evaluate, and serve students with special needs, including students receiving special education services, English Language Learners, gifted and talented students, and students who may require interventions in the general-education setting. ASI proposes to serve its special education students in its "embedded" school, JDI, but that school is apparently focused solely on serving students with autism spectrum disorder; ASI does not explain how it will identify, evaluate, and serve students with other qualifying disabilities. It is not even clear from the application whether students receiving special education services would be enrolled in ASI or JDI. ASI also fails to explain how it would implement Response-to-Intervention and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.

The application, and statements by Ms. Brannberg during the capacity interview, reflects a concerning lack of understanding of legal and practical requirements for serving special populations of students.

The Superintendent or designee is hereby directed to provide a copy of this Resolution to the Colorado Department of Education within fifteen days of its adoption date.

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ADOPTED this 23rd day of May 2023.

DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1

By: _____

Mike Peterson,
President, Board of Education

ATTEST: _____

Becky Myers
Secretary, Board of Education