



New York State Board of Regents  
State Education Department  
Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12234

February 26, 2021

To the Board of Regents:

La Cima Charter School serves students in grades K-5 in Community School District (CSD) 16. Our mission is to prepare our students for academic and life-long success through a rigorous and relevant academic program. The 2020-21 school year is our 12th year of operation and the last year of a five-year term approved in April 2016. We applied to renew La Cima's charter in 2020. In February 2021, we received our final Renewal Site Visit Report, dated January 19, 2021. This letter represents our response to the report.

On page 18 of the report, the CSO indicates that "Although there have been only two formal complaints filed during the charter term, the CSO has received multiple informal complaints regarding bullying. After receiving a formal complaint regarding bullying, the NYSED Commissioner issued a decision requiring the school to create policies and procedures as required by DASA in order to comply with the requirements of the Education Law and its charter."

We would like to respond to the above excerpt.

Regarding the informal complaints: Despite having visited the school several times over the course of the charter term and holding monthly calls with the Executive Director for the entirety of the 2019-2020 school year, these informal complaints were never brought to the attention of the school leaders or La Cima's Board of Trustees. When the Executive Director was made aware of the informal complaints during the renewal report review process and inquired to receive more information to appropriately address possible concerns, the request was denied by the CSO. The school has no information regarding the timing of these complaints, the frequency of the complaints, or the context of the complaints. It is also noted that these complaints did not materialize into formal complaints to the CSO so were likely either resolved or unfounded. The school is unclear as to which since the only information provided about these informal complaints is what is indicated in the renewal report.

Regarding the DASA policy: La Cima had a DASA policy in place over the course of the charter term. During the 18-19 Mid-Term visit, the CSO stated in their final report published April 22, 2020 that "by the time of the visit the board at La Cima had passed and implemented at the school a DASA policy previously submitted and approved by the CSO office. This was discussed with the leadership at the school during the visit." Additionally, the school submitted an updated DASA policy with the August 2020 renewal application. The NYSED Commissioner issued a decision regarding the need to submit a DASA policy in October 2020, two school years after the CSO's mid-term visit in 18-19 and several months after an updated version was already submitted to the CSO.

On page 31, in the section pertaining to Benchmark 10, the report states: "Throughout its current charter term, LCCS has compiled a mixed record of compliance with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter, including those concerning enrollment policy, protecting the rights of students, and safety requirements; however, it has worked to correct deficiencies. In addition, the school's enrollment policy required extensive revision to be legally compliant, and other significant policy and by-law revisions were initiated by the school itself. LCCS has had uncategorized uncertified teachers during most years in the charter term; however, the school is currently in compliance with teacher certification requirements. Finally, school officials have not been complying with fingerprinting and clearance requirements for staff, a serious safety violation. In response, the school has adopted a



multi-step, comprehensive process to ensure that all school employees have fingerprint clearance prior to their start date at the school.”

We would like to respond to several of the claims made in the excerpt above.

**Regarding the “extensive revision” to our enrollment policy:** We submitted our enrollment policy to the CSO during renewal in 2016 and more recently in March 2020. During both reviews, the policy was approved by the office and no changes were recommended. Recently, after submitting our application for renewal to the New York State Education Department Charter Schools Office (CSO), the office asked us to make several non-material changes to improve compliance. The board approved changes in response to the feedback from the CSO.

**Regarding “significant policy and by-law revisions:”** The report references “significant policy and by-law revisions” submitted with our renewal application. La Cima submitted non-material revisions to our complaint policy, discipline policy/code of conduct, by-laws, and enrollment policy. These revisions were initiated to improve policy clarity, update our policies to match our new administration, and generally ensure compliance. Our board continues to be diligent in reviewing and approving changes to our policies when warranted.

Our entire program responds to our students’ need for high-quality instruction by constantly elevating teaching and learning. We believe that high-quality instruction and an operationally sound school is a tool for social justice. The outcomes of our efforts are shown in our subgroup performance on the 18-19 NYS assessment where all four subgroups (especially our homeless population) outperformed the district, the city, and the state in ELA and Math. We have also demonstrated good faith efforts in increasing our SWD population to meet the district of location, as noted in the Renewal Site Visit Report. We are hopeful that our continued partnership with NYSED CSO will be in support of our efforts to offer a high-quality school option for the families of Bed-Stuy.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Lucy Joffe".

Lucy Joffe, Chair  
La Cima Charter School Board of Trustees