

4

To: Cambridge City Council
From: Emily Dexter, 9 Fenno St.
Date: June 22, 2015
Re: Charter Schools

Because there is a motion on the agenda about getting more data about Cambridge children and youth enrolled in charter schools, I wanted to take the opportunity to share information with the City Council related to the topic of charter schools.

I'm not going to offer any opinion about charter schools or about the four charters that are located in Cambridge because I think it is a complex issue that goes beyond pro- or anti-charter schools. I'm not either. But a couple things to note:

1. Not all Cambridge students attending charter schools attend the ones here in Cambridge. Some are enrolled at Roxbury Prep in Boston, and so on. Knowing how many are in the different schools and at what grade levels, how long they stay, and so on, would be useful information. What is it that charters are offering that our public schools are not. Basic market research.
2. Our charter school enrollment is increasing every year. The FY16 CPS budget, pg. 184, only shows data for the last five years, but it has gone from 339 students in FY10 to an estimated 462 this year, which is a 36% increase in five years, with the biggest jump of 56 additional students between last year and this year.
3. Charters currently receive about \$25,000 per student, with about \$22,000 of that coming from the city. Charters do not have district overhead, they don't run buses, they don't pay for crossing guards, and so all of the \$25,000 is spent at the school level. That means that our charter school students receive much better school-level funding per student than do our public school students. We have very unequal school-level funding per pupil across our 12 elementary schools. Our average salaries, benefits, plus expenses per pupil at the school level is \$17,360 per student, but that ranges from \$14,000 per student at the lowest per pupil funded school to \$23,300 at the highest per pupil school. It's not comparable to charter school spending because they pay for their own utilities, and building costs, which are not included in our school-level spending estimate, but we can estimate that charters are spending at least \$4,000-\$5,000 more per student at the school level than CPS.
4. This is reflected in the staffing of some of our charters. I don't have data for all our Cambridge charters, but I can tell you that the number of students per general education teacher in CPS is 14 students per teacher, but at Community Charter School of Cambridge, it is only 10 students per teacher. I.e. CPS has about 30% fewer teachers per student than Community Charter School of Cambridge (CCSC).
5. Providing students with a good education is expensive. If you go to the website for BB&N private school, which has 1,000 students pre-K12, you will see that their operating budget is \$37.5 million. In other words, a BB&N education costs an average of \$36,864 per pupil, and they provide no busing, their teachers are paid less than ours, and they have no district overhead.