

From: [Heather Stinnett](#)
To: [SPCSA Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public comment ahead of December 16, 2022 meeting
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Hello,

My name is Heather Stinnett. I am a former Board Member for Discovery Charter School and most importantly, I am a proud DCS parent.

My son began his education at DCS as a Kindergartener. The following year is when the school went into receivership from a prior administration. My husband and I talked about finding a different school, but we decided to be a part of the solution to help make DCS the great school that it is today. I am thankful everyday that we did not leave Discovery Charter School.

I understand that the SPCSA has very smart and diligent people who make recommendations to The Board, but in the case of denying DCS to expand enrollment by 120 kids, I vehemently disagree with their assessment of our community. And I would like to explain why.

First, the 99 student increase at Hillpointe will allow us the needed revenue to pay our loan that was secured for the new building. This is an effort that the DCS Board has worked on for a few years to secure funding (which we did), to secure Summerlin Community approval (which we have), and secure construction plans (which we have). SPCSA staff have been aware of these plans for years. It has only been recently where the school was notified of the recommendation to deny our growth. While allowing our growth at both campuses is best, at the very least we must be allowed to grow the number at Hillpointe. If we cannot build, our middle school will not be able to support any additional kids, if Sandhill does hit the current enrollment cap. Our space limitations are unsustainable.

I understand the STAR rating concerns. In this matter, DCS has shown so much improvement. However, in the past, 21 students were rated as a separate middle school at Sandhill, which hurt our overall scores unfairly. As they should have been considered as a single middle school pool. Then COVID hit and scores were off for sometime. Not to mention that all children in all grades have shown a decline in learning. Despite those challenges, our kids keep improving. We are the 'Bad News Bears' of Las Vegas Charter Schools, but we keep going!

The Sandhill campus makes concentrated efforts to bring in underserved kids from the area public schools. This is a great benefit overall, but the kids' struggles from CCSD schools carry over into the DCS ratings. These will eventually even out as our teachers continue to work with the students. But CCSD gaps cannot be erased overnight. And aside from what you may see on paper, DCS students (like my son and his friends) are excelling. As parents we see the growth in our children. We know DCS is their champion. In recent years a GATE program was added to support these high achieving kids. DCS is doing something right!

Academic progress, to be reflected in STAR ratings, can best be achieved by support from the

SPCSA in allowing us to grow. We need more students, to increase funds, to be able to support larger facilities. It is all tied together. Our kids unfortunately do not have a library, a science lab area, an arts room, or even a place to eat inside from the Valley's extreme temperatures (at Hillpointe). The new building at Hillpointe and the Sandhill campus moving will allow DCS to have these resources that the kids so desperately need.

Additionally, the recommendation states, "Specifically, both the Sandhill and Hillpointe campuses serve a lower percentage of students with disabilities, students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and English learners compared to both Clark County and the State." DCS routinely seeks out students of need. These students (specifically in the Sandhill area) then move into the Middle School which is served at the Hillpointe location. Without an increase in student seats, how are we to add more "underserved" children? I do not believe anyone is comfortable with accepting kids for enrollment based on their economic, race, or disability status in order to impact the population makeup of the school. We believe in equity. And our current diverse makeup is evident at drop off on any given day. And those DCS students who do meet reduced lunch criteria, do not have a place to have a free or reduced lunch, because we do not have the room, and are not allowed to grow. We have a therapy dog program and staff to support special needs populations, but again, we do not have the room to devote to their special educational needs. Which is why we need to grow.

At a recent board meeting in October, members cited the need for Charter Schools to have transportation to make enrollment and equity a factor in new charter schools. We have a bus, fully paid for and owned outright by DCS. Only one other charter school in Southern Nevada has this. We can support growth and serve more kids equitably if allowed to grow our school.

Last, with Governor Joe Lombardo pledging to allow more Nevada citizens to exercise their choice as parents. The need for charter schools to support more families will be key. DCS is not perfect, no school is. But I can speak for my family and many others who have made our choice. Our kids are thriving at Discovery Charter School! I trust the men and women of DCS who have an integral part in my son's education and upbringing. I write this letter to fight for his education and for that of other families. Our ability to grow is key to their success. If the SPCSA is truly committed to their success, then please allow us the seats we need to support these kids and their education. We cannot support our children unless we are allowed to grow.


Please consider voting to support my son and his friends. And thank you for your your time and support.

Best, Heather Stinnett



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