

# Illinois States Charter School Commission

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Illinois State Charter School Commission Grants the Appeals of Two Chicago-based Charter High Schools

CHICAGO IL March 20, 2019 – Illinois State Charter School Commission (SCSC) voted yesterday on appeals of three Chicago-area Charter Schools. SCSC granted the appeals of Intrinsic Schools and Urban Prep Academies while denying the appeal of Chicago Education Partnership. Yesterday’s decision provides Chicago students with access to seats in unique and quality high school options.

In Illinois, as is the case in 26 other states, charter schools have a right to appeal an adverse decision of the local Board of Education. The Illinois Administrative Code mandates a *de novo* review of appeals and the Illinois Charter Schools Law requires a decision based on a two prong-test, of whether: 1) the charter school is compliant with the law, and 2) the charter school is in the best interests of students it is designed to serve. The statute also requires preference be given to proposals with (1) a high level of community support; (2) a track record of rigorous pupil achievement; (3) and those designed to enroll and serve at-risk children.

Intrinsic Schools, which currently operates a Level 1+ high school in the Hermosa neighborhood, qualified for all three preferences. More than 3,000 letters of support were received, 388 were from students representing 10 zip codes from across the city. The school is committed to “preparing students from high-need communities for postsecondary success and *intrinsically* motivating them to positively impact the world.” Evaluation of the appeal found that the proposal met the standards across academic, operational and financial domains and increases access to a high-quality secondary option for families in the city.

SCSC staff and a panel of independent experts conducted a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation process of the three appeals, which involved: a forensic review of the academic data, governance and financial reports, school site visits, parent and teacher focus groups, interviews with the charter school and the school district; a public hearing and email forum to accept community input.

“The public hearing, focus groups and email forum are opportunities for the Commission to gain a better understanding of the local context from parents, students, teachers - those who are most connected and impacted by the decision,” said Shenita Johnson, Executive Director, Illinois State Charter School Commission.

Urban Prep West is an all-boys, high school that boasts of graduating its students from high school and ensuring they enroll in a 2- or 4-year college. The school was rated as a Level 2 by CPS for four years, which was the reason the Board voted to revoke its charter last year. Site visit observations at the school found that teaching and learning deservedly needed to be more rigorous; however, that school was making adjustments to the delivery of the academic program and made reasonable progress toward achievement of the content standards.

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Tenth graders scored in the 83<sup>rd</sup> percentile of Reading growth and the 31<sup>st</sup> percentile of Math growth on the PSAT. Urban Prep-West students could attend more than 27 different schools based their zip code; but, all decided to enroll in the charter school which outperformed 20 of those schools on the SAT last year. Urban Prep West serves a 98% African American student population, the majority of whom will be first generation college students.

SCSC voted to deny the appeal filed by Chicago Education Partnership (CEP) following Chicago Public Schools #299 denial of CEP's proposal seeking to establish Moving Everest 2. Based upon its evaluation and analysis of the appeal the Commission concluded that that proposal is in compliance with the charter schools law, but at this time, it is not in the best interests of students the school is designed to serve.

Since 2011, SCSC has carried out the original intent of legislators with fidelity and integrity. Fifty-eight appeals have been filed with the Commission and before today only seven (7) schools have been approved. SCSC schools are located across the state in Chicago, Elgin, Grayslake, Richton Park, and Waukegan. Schools approved by the SCSC are held accountable to academic, operational and financial performance aligned with the law and its policies.

## ABOUT ILLINOIS STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Illinois State Charter School Commission (ISCSC) was established in 2011 as an independent body with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and to hold charters accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout Illinois. The vision of SCSC is that all Illinois children and families have access to a high quality public education and experience high performing schools and academic experiences.

For more information please visit <https://www.isbe.net/pages/illinois-state-charter-school-commission.aspx>

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