

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
COMMUNITY INPUT HEARING
INSPIRA STEAM ACADEMY

July 7, 2025

11:00 a.m.

New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum
4100 Dripping Springs Road
Las Cruces, New Mexico

-AND-

Via Zoom Webinar

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<p style="text-align: right;">2</p> <p>1 APPEARANCES</p> <p>2 COMMISSIONERS:</p> <p>3 REBEKKA BURT, Chair</p> <p>4 PATRICIA GIPSON, Vice Chair</p> <p>5 STEVEN J. CARILLO, Secretary</p> <p>6 REBEKKA BURT, Member</p> <p>7 STEWART INGHAM, Member</p> <p>8 SAM OBENSHAIN, Member</p> <p>9 K.T. MANIS, Member</p> <p>10 STAFF:</p> <p>11 BRIGETTE RUSSELL Interim Director</p> <p>12 Charter School/Options for</p> <p>13 Parents and Families Division</p> <p>14 MELISSA (MISSY) BROWN Interim Deputy Director</p> <p>15 Charter School/Options for</p> <p>16 Parents and Families Division</p> <p>17 CONSUELO CONSTANTINE NMPED Liaison to the NMPEC</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4</p> <p>1 THE CHAIR: Good morning. It's 11:01 a.m.</p> <p>2 I'll call our hearing to order, and we'll go ahead</p> <p>3 and -- Secretary Carrillo.</p> <p>4 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Chair Burt.</p> <p>5 THE CHAIR: Here.</p> <p>6 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Vice Chair Gipson.</p> <p>7 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Here.</p> <p>8 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Here we go.</p> <p>9 And Commissioner Clahchischilliaage.</p> <p>10 (No response.)</p> <p>11 SECRETARY CARRILLO: And Commissioner</p> <p>12 Manis.</p> <p>13 COMMISSIONER MANIS: Here.</p> <p>14 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Commissioner Ingham.</p> <p>15 COMMISSIONER INGHAM: Here.</p> <p>16 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Commissioner Beck.</p> <p>17 (No response.)</p> <p>18 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Commissioner Beck is</p> <p>19 still in Alaska? Okay.</p> <p>20 And Commissioner Obenshain.</p> <p>21 COMMISSIONER OBENSHAIN: Here.</p> <p>22 SECRETARY CARRILLO: And I believe that's</p> <p>23 it. So we have eight here -- no, seven here. One,</p> <p>24 two, three, four, five six -- no, six. Six, and</p> <p>25 we're expecting Sharon later.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">3</p> <p>1 INDEX TO PROCEEDINGS</p> <p>2 PAGE</p> <p>3 1 Call to Order, Roll Call, 4</p> <p>4 Pledge of Allegiance,</p> <p>5 Salute to the New Mexico Flag</p> <p>6 2 Approval of the Agenda 5</p> <p>7 3 Community Input Hearing 5</p> <p>8 A. Comments from PEC Chair 6</p> <p>9 B. Presentation by the Applicant 8</p> <p>10 C. Comments from the School District 26</p> <p>11 D. Comments from Tribal Authorities 33</p> <p>12 E. Comments from the Public 34</p> <p>13 F. PEC Questions 72</p> <p>14 4 Recess 140</p> <p>15 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 141</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">5</p> <p>1 THE CHAIR: All right. Thank you.</p> <p>2 All right. Next, we'll ask everyone to go</p> <p>3 ahead and stand up and do the Pledge of Allegiance</p> <p>4 and Salute to the New Mexico Flag.</p> <p>5 (Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the</p> <p>6 New Mexico Flag conducted.)</p> <p>7 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next item is the</p> <p>8 approval of the agenda.</p> <p>9 And if nobody has any changes, I will move</p> <p>10 to approve the agenda.</p> <p>11 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Second.</p> <p>12 THE CHAIR: Thank you. There is a motion</p> <p>13 and a second.</p> <p>14 Any discussion?</p> <p>15 (No response.)</p> <p>16 THE CHAIR: Seeing none, Secretary -- or,</p> <p>17 actually, we don't have anyone online; right?</p> <p>18 All right.</p> <p>19 So all in favor, say "Aye."</p> <p>20 (Commissioners so indicate.)</p> <p>21 THE CHAIR: All opposed, "Nay"?</p> <p>22 (No response.)</p> <p>23 THE CHAIR: The ayes have it.</p> <p>24 That brings us to Item 3, our Community</p> <p>25 Input Hearing for Inspira STEAM Academy.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">6</p> <p>1 First thing we'll do, for comments from 2 the PEC Chair, we'll first go around and introduce 3 ourselves as Commissioners. 4 We'll start with Commissioner Ingham. 5 And, Cindy, if you are having a hard time 6 with any Commissioner, the microphone, let us know 7 when you hear us. 8 THE REPORTER: Will do. Thank you. 9 COMMISSIONER INGHAM: I'll try to behave. 10 My name is Stewart Ingham. I am the 11 Commissioner for District 6, which is close to here, 12 but not quite. 13 I have the ten counties in the southwest 14 corner of the state. Thank you. 15 COMMISSIONER OBENSHAIN: I am Sam 16 Obenshain. I am Commissioner for District 1, which 17 is mostly southern Albuquerque. 18 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: I'm Pattie Gipson, 19 District 7, which is very close to here, because it 20 is most of Doña Ana County. So... 21 THE CHAIR: My name is Bekka Burt. I have 22 District 4. So I have from Sandoval County up to 23 Los Alamos and then kind of over into Santa Fe area 24 and Española -- or, sorry -- the -- the 25 Estancia Valley. Estancia.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">8</p> <p>1 All-righty. That being said, I just want 2 to make sure, if anyone -- if -- everyone just 3 double-check. Make sure your phone is off so you're 4 not one of the ones that has the weird music that 5 comes on and you have to embarrassingly turn it off. 6 That being said, I would love to pass it 7 off to you all. And whoever would like to start, if 8 you first could introduce yourselves. Make sure you 9 spell your last name just for the reporter. You 10 only have to do that once. And then we'll start 11 your time after your introductions. 12 MS. RIVERA-TAPIA: It might help. There 13 we go. Sorry about that. 14 Good morning to all the Commissioners, 15 members of the Public Education Department, and 16 every single person in the audience. Thank you for 17 being here. (Spanish spoken.) 18 I would like to begin by acknowledging the 19 land we stand on. Las Cruces resides on the 20 ancestral and traditional lands of the Piro Manso 21 Tiwa people who have inhabited this land for 22 generations. 23 We recognize their enduring connection to 24 this place and honor their history, their culture, 25 and contributions to this community.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">7</p> <p>1 SECRETARY CARRILLO: I'm Steve Carrillo, 2 District 10, which is most of the north, Santa Fe 3 except Edgewood, and Rio Arriba, except the Four 4 Corners, and Taos, except Red River, all the way to 5 Colorado. 6 COMMISSIONER MANIS: K.T. Manis, 7 District 9, Lea County, Eddy County, Otero County, 8 and then a small smidgen of Doña Ana and Chavez 9 County. 10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And then we'll go 11 to you and have you present your applicant team 12 next. 13 So today we're here for a community input 14 hearing. It is part of our process after submitting 15 a new application. 16 We will be focused on hearing the public 17 comment. But the Commissioners will have an 18 opportunity to ask any questions at the end of the 19 public comment. 20 At the -- at the next meeting, the 21 Commission will put together any concerns that the 22 Commission may have, and you'll receive that letter 23 from the Commission shortly after, and that'll help 24 you prepare for your August application hearing up 25 in Santa Fe.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">9</p> <p>1 My name is Julia Rivera-Tapia, R-i-v-e-r 2 (verbatim) hyphen T-a-p-i-a, Tapia, lead founder and 3 proposed executive director of Inspira STEAM 4 Academy. It is now my honor to introduce the key 5 members who have helped bring this vision to life, 6 thinking partners, authors, and collaborators of 7 Inspira STEAM Academy. 8 With me, I have Jessica Castro-Buelna. 9 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: Good morning, 10 Madam Chair and Commissioners. My name is Jessica 11 Castro-Buelna. C-a-s-t-r-o hyphen B-u-e-l-n-a. 12 I was born and raised here in New Mexico. 13 I have taught in bilingual programs the last seven 14 years. 15 I am a proud graduate with a bachelor's 16 degree and two master's degrees in education and 17 leadership from Western New Mexico University. 18 My "why" begins as a student myself. I 19 was a pre-K dropout because I didn't know English. 20 And when I would get there, most of the time, they 21 were screaming at me, yelling at me because I didn't 22 know the language. 23 So I thought to myself, when I grow up, I 24 want to make a difference in students' lives. 25 So bilingualism, to me, has been a major</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">10</p> <p>1 role in my life. And why not encourage our students 2 to have STEAM fields with bilingualism in it? 3 Thank you. 4 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Next, we have 5 Ms. Gonzales. 6 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: Good morning, 7 Madam Chair and Commissioners. Thank you everyone 8 for being here. My name is Christina Gonzales -- 9 G-o-n-z-a-l-e-s. 10 I am proud to be part of the Inspira team. 11 They are a very passionate group of individuals. 12 As a special educator, it's extremely 13 important to me that all students are reached. As a 14 parent of a child with special needs and a teacher 15 of students with special needs, having an inclusive 16 education is nonnegotiable for me. 17 This team is -- is very well-trained. 18 They've got lots of experience. And my background 19 in early intervention and working with students with 20 behavioral and autism needs is just really important 21 to me to be part of a program like this. 22 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Next we have 23 Ms. Patricia (Trish) Watkins. 24 MS. PATRICIA WATKINS: Good morning, 25 Madam Chair and Commissioners. I'm Patricia</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">12</p> <p>1 MS. VANESSA DE LEON: Good morning. 2 Vanessa de Leon, General Counsel for Inspira. 3 Good morning, Madam Chair, Commissioners. 4 It's definitely a blessing and an opportunity to 5 work with this team. 6 This is actually an area that's near and 7 dear to my heart. I myself started school speaking 8 only Spanish, so learned English and bilingualism 9 through education, public education, an amazing 10 educator. So this is not just a mission that I 11 support; but it's also one that's very near and dear 12 to the work that I do and to the heart. So thank 13 you for the opportunity. 14 THE CHAIR: Thank you. 15 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: In the audience, 16 we also have Mr. Enrique Avalos, who is a founder. 17 We have Ms. Vanessa Alegria, who is also a founder 18 in the audience. 19 And online, we have Ms. Diana Silva, who 20 is our treasurer; Ms. Joy Chavez, who is a member. 21 We also have Ms. Susana Tapia Harper in the 22 audience. And we have Mr. Matt Garcia, who is also 23 one of the proposed governing board members. 24 THE CHAIR: Thank you. So now we'll go 25 ahead. Now your presentation time will start. You</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">11</p> <p>1 Watkins. W-a-t-k-i-n-s. 2 Just like my fellow coworkers, because 3 we've worked together, I am also inspired because of 4 having a child with disabilities. It was really 5 heartwarming to hear what they have to say, and 6 having that option for families, because my children 7 think very differently. And asking my opinion and 8 seeing how my kids would react is what really 9 engaged me into this project. 10 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: I have Mr. Chris 11 Masters, our business manager. 12 MR. CHRIS MASTERS: Good morning. I 13 cannot tell you the inspiration that all these 14 ladies and educators have given me. For so long, 15 Las Cruces -- out of all places in New Mexico, you 16 would fear that there would be so many dual-language 17 programs in Las Cruces. Not so. 18 This goes back to the time whenever my 19 daughter was going to school, and now my grandkids. 20 They can't get into a dual-language program. 21 And the passion with which these guys are 22 operating is -- is beyond. And I'm just very happy 23 to be a part of it. 24 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: And we have 25 Ms. -- Dr. Vanessa DeLeon.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">13</p> <p>1 have 20 minutes. 2 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: If you could 3 please go to Slide 5. One back, please. Thank you. 4 The mission and vision of Inspira. 5 Inspira STEAM Academy will cultivate 6 globally minded scholars through rigorous Spanish 7 language acquisition focused on STEAM instructional 8 programming. At Inspira STEAM Academy, we are 9 committed to fostering a transformative educational 10 journey for a diverse community of learners. We are 11 committed to integrating bilingual education and 12 STEAM through inquiry-based learning. 13 Our aim is to foster an innovative, 14 engaging educational environment that promotes 15 cognitive development, sparks creativity, and equips 16 students with the skills they need to thrive in a 17 complex, interconnected world. 18 By teaching Spanish through the lens of 19 STEAM, we are giving our students the tools to 20 become competitive citizens, where they pursue 21 higher education to enter the work force. 22 Spanish fluency combined with the ability 23 to think and communicate in technical disciplines 24 will prepare students to contribute meaningfully in 25 both local and international contexts.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">14</p> <p>1 In doing so, we are strengthening the</p> <p>2 Las Cruces community, producing students who can</p> <p>3 think critically, solve real-world problems, and</p> <p>4 access knowledge across cultures and borders.</p> <p>5 With fluency in Spanish, our students will</p> <p>6 be able to connect with communities, not just in</p> <p>7 New Mexico, but across Latin America and the world.</p> <p>8 Slide 6.</p> <p>9 Why this program matters more than ever.</p> <p>10 Our deepest aspiration is to create the best</p> <p>11 possible opportunities for the children of</p> <p>12 Las Cruces, opportunities that are inclusive,</p> <p>13 equitable, and life-changing, regardless of a</p> <p>14 family's background or financial means.</p> <p>15 Here we see the first Mexican-American</p> <p>16 astronaut, Dr. Jose Hernandez, who was the first</p> <p>17 migrant worker to travel to space. Hernandez flew</p> <p>18 on the STS-128 mission aboard Space Shuttle</p> <p>19 Discovery in 2009.</p> <p>20 My name is Julia Rivera-Tapia, and I'm a</p> <p>21 lifelong learner and educator with over 20 years of</p> <p>22 experience, a proud product of the Albuquerque</p> <p>23 Public Schools, and a graduate both from the</p> <p>24 University of New Mexico and Columbia University in</p> <p>25 the City of New York.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">16</p> <p>1 As a current doctoral student, a working</p> <p>2 mother, an educator, and a proud citizen of this</p> <p>3 land, I believe deeply that we can do more and must</p> <p>4 do more to serve our children.</p> <p>5 The word "Inspira" means to inspire. That</p> <p>6 is our mission: to inspire children, families, and</p> <p>7 futures.</p> <p>8 For some students, this will change their</p> <p>9 life forever -- for some families. The earlier we</p> <p>10 expose children, especially girls, to the STEAM</p> <p>11 fields, the more likely they are to pursue and</p> <p>12 succeed in them.</p> <p>13 Today minorities and women remain</p> <p>14 significantly underrepresented in these areas. This</p> <p>15 is a gap we intend to close. It is now Inspira's</p> <p>16 turn to give back to the community by believing and</p> <p>17 equipping the children of Las Cruces.</p> <p>18 Slide 7, please.</p> <p>19 FROM THE FLOOR: Back one.</p> <p>20 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Back one, please.</p> <p>21 Equity of education for all underserved</p> <p>22 populations.</p> <p>23 Inspira STEAM Academy is deeply committed</p> <p>24 to ensuring equity for all underserved populations,</p> <p>25 as highlighted in the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">15</p> <p>1 As we prepare to celebrate the 250th</p> <p>2 anniversary of the United States next year, we</p> <p>3 reflect on the strength of this nation, a strength</p> <p>4 born from diversity, from resilience, and the</p> <p>5 countless stories that make up the American</p> <p>6 experience.</p> <p>7 My parents were immigrants who, like many</p> <p>8 others, came to this country seeking a better life</p> <p>9 for their families. They had limited academic</p> <p>10 resources, but gave us everything that they could,</p> <p>11 especially the values of hard work and</p> <p>12 responsibility. And those values became the</p> <p>13 foundation for everything that I have achieved.</p> <p>14 I was able to pursue higher education</p> <p>15 thanks to the people of New Mexico, teachers who</p> <p>16 inspired me, counselors who guided me, and programs</p> <p>17 like the New Mexico State's lottery scholarship that</p> <p>18 opened doors to opportunity. And I am here today</p> <p>19 because a community believed in me.</p> <p>20 As we mark this important milestone, I am</p> <p>21 reminded our true strength lies in stories like</p> <p>22 mine, maybe the people in the audience, and yours,</p> <p>23 where families work hard, communities uplift one</p> <p>24 another, and the opportunity is made real through</p> <p>25 education and support.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">17</p> <p>1 For Native American students, we will</p> <p>2 foster student-led learning by avoiding preset</p> <p>3 units, allowing learners to help shape their</p> <p>4 educational experience.</p> <p>5 Inspira will promote pride and personal</p> <p>6 identity and cultivate safe, inclusive environments</p> <p>7 for backgrounds and all belief systems.</p> <p>8 For students with disabilities, we will</p> <p>9 provide a flexible special education model, including</p> <p>10 both push-in and pullout services.</p> <p>11 We will ensure collaboration between</p> <p>12 special education staff and classroom teachers to</p> <p>13 ensure individualized needs/support needs.</p> <p>14 We will provide a Free Appropriate Public</p> <p>15 Education in the least restrictive environment for</p> <p>16 the Individuals With Disabilities Act. This</p> <p>17 includes students with IEP and those eligible for</p> <p>18 IEPs. Inspira will ensure full compliance with</p> <p>19 federal and state laws and regulations.</p> <p>20 We will also identify students who</p> <p>21 demonstrate gifted abilities and provide a gifted</p> <p>22 Individualized Educational Program.</p> <p>23 For the English Learners, they will</p> <p>24 receive a targeted small group instruction. That</p> <p>25 means 45 minutes five times per week. Teachers will</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">18</p> <p>1 be trained in the second language acquisition, and 2 this will help misidentification of disability. 3 For students who are economically 4 disadvantaged, we will ensure universal meals to 5 ensure that students have their basic needs met, 6 creating a foundation for academic success. 7 We will be a uniform school, which will 8 help promote equity by reducing visible 9 socioeconomic differences and creating a level 10 playing field in terms of appearance. 11 Inspira will provide the first two uniform 12 shirts to every student. We currently have a 13 community member who has committed to donating funds 14 to make this possible. 15 For our students who are highly mobile, a 16 dedicated liaison will oversee the support for 17 students experiencing homelessness, ensuring legal 18 compliance and access to resources. The liaison 19 will serve as a primary point of contact for 20 families, promoting stability and awareness of their 21 rights. 22 And for all students, small classes will 23 provide more individualized attention and improve 24 academic outcomes, increase teacher-student 25 interaction, boost engagement/performance,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">20</p> <p>1 predominantly in Spanish to establish a strong 2 foundation. As students gain proficiency, the 3 balance will gradually shift to include more content 4 in English until reaching a 50/50 balance. 5 Language development is in the STEAM 6 context. New research published in the Journal of 7 Autism Research indicates that bilingualism can have 8 many cognitive benefits which may be particularly 9 helpful to kids with autism spectrum disorder. They 10 found that children who spoke two or more languages 11 often had stronger executive functioning skills. 12 And this means that they are able to control 13 impulses and to switch between different tasks more 14 easily than children who only spoke one language. 15 Next slide, please. 16 Why teaching Spanish matters. 17 English is currently the most widely 18 spoken language globally, followed by Mandarin 19 Chinese, Hindi, and Spanish. But Spanish, as a 20 romance language, opens sources to even more, 21 enabling communication across French, Italian, and 22 Portuguese communities. Its structure and 23 pronunciation make it a stepping stone to languages 24 like Japanese and Greek. 25 Mastering Spanish doesn't just broaden</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">19</p> <p>1 particularly in the early grades. 2 Next slide, please. 3 The research by Thomas and Collier on 4 English Learners long-term achievement bi-program 5 model (verbatim) indicates that dual-language 6 programs are the most effective in closing the 7 achievement gap for English Language Learners over 8 the long term. 9 This is, particularly, when sustained for 10 five to six years. 11 Their work emphasizes the importance of 12 long-term, high-quality bilingual education in 13 helping ELs achieve academic parity with their 14 native English peers. 15 Why is this important to us? The core 16 findings and principles of Thomas and Collier's 17 research, English Learners' long-term achievement 18 bi-program model, are applicable to students 19 learning Spanish and, indeed, to students learning 20 any second language. 21 Our bilingual model aims to develop 22 proficiency in both languages, emphasizing high 23 levels of fluency in the targeted language, while 24 also enhancing native language skills. 25 Initially, instruction will be</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">21</p> <p>1 your vocabulary; it opens worlds. 2 Next slide, please. 3 "To develop a complete mind, study the 4 science of art. Study the art of science. Learn 5 how to see. Realize that everything connects to 6 everything else." Leonardo da Vinci. 7 Our STEAM approach integrates various 8 subjects into a cohesive learning experience, 9 directly mirroring how adults solve complex problems 10 daily. 11 Students will gain knowledge in both 12 languages by learning in an integrated way, and will 13 have a combination of language, science, 14 mathematics, and technology in interdisciplinary 15 units. This method promotes a holistic 16 understanding by considering issues from multiple 17 disciplines. Learning in this manner will foster 18 communication and teamwork among teachers and 19 students. 20 Students will have fun while 21 (incomprehensible) solutions for real world issues 22 that require interdisciplinary approaches. And it 23 will be relevant to students to understand that 24 different subjects do frequently intersect. 25 Next slide, please.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">22</p> <p>1 Okay. This is my favorite slide. I love 2 these babies. 3 So this pedagogical approach centers 4 around students exploring questions, problems, or 5 scenarios that interest the student. This 6 emphasizes active learning and critical thinking 7 skills as students seek out information, formulate 8 questions, and draw conclusions based on evidence. 9 Educators will act as facilitators, 10 guiding students through the process of inquiry and 11 helping them develop research and problem-solving 12 skills. Lessons will involve hands-on activities, 13 experiments, and real-world problem-solving tasks 14 that encourage students to engage deeply within the 15 material. 16 At Inspira, students will be encouraged to 17 reflect on their learning process and findings, 18 iterating their questions and approaches based on 19 new insights and feedback. 20 The students will also present their 21 knowledge every six to eight weeks. 22 And we see here in this slide just the 23 eyes of wonder, the eyes of excitement when you 24 figure out that something is not going to topple 25 down, and just the pride that they have.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">24</p> <p>1 The kids will showcase projects every six 2 to eight weeks. The staff hours are from 7:00 a.m. 3 to 3:30 p.m., and the student hours are from 7:30 to 4 3:00 p.m. 5 Next slide, please. 6 Proposed location of Inspira. 7 Inspira STEAM Academy will provide 8 bilingual STEAM programming in the East Mesa of 9 Las Cruces. This location is in close proximity to 10 community organizations that we will partner up 11 with. 12 Inspira intends to be strategically 13 located near major STEAM-focused institutions, such 14 as Spaceport America, New Mexico State University, 15 and White Sands Missile and NASA. 16 Next slide, please. 17 To provide students with better academic 18 outcomes, our team intends to interact with our 19 community by providing learning opportunities for 20 their children to learn Spanish through STEAM. 21 Our partnerships are not only destinations 22 that the children will know about, but they will be 23 organizations that will be a part of their daily 24 interactions while they are students at Inspira. 25 Through our established partnerships with</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">23</p> <p>1 And we see the students presenting. And 2 that's actually one of my classrooms many, many 3 years ago when I was teaching first grade. And it 4 is amazing what students can do when given the 5 opportunity and guiding them in the correct way. 6 All of these babies are trilingual. 7 Next slide, please. 8 Inspira STEAM Academy has an enriched 9 academic calendar. We have 174 instructional days, 10 136 hours of professional development. 11 The first Wednesday of the month from 12 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. (verbatim) will be 13 professional development. 14 The children will be on campus to engage 15 in STEAM-enriched community learning. This is 16 really important that we have the professional 17 development at that time. Historically, through the 18 years that I've been teaching, it's very hard for 19 parents to pick up children when we have early 20 release. 21 What occurred the last couple of years -- 22 and we found this out through the equity council -- 23 is that parents would stop bringing their kids to 24 school every Wednesday. So we had horrible 25 attendance. So this will mitigate that problem.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">25</p> <p>1 NMSU, our teachers will engage in professional 2 development tailored to their programs. 3 MC Squared will provide professional 4 development, both on and off campus; this is through 5 NMSU. We will interact with the NMSU STEAM 6 program -- STEM program -- I apologize, bilingual 7 department, the education department, the 8 engineering departments, and, of course, the art 9 department. Next slide, please. 10 These are some of the business and 11 community partnerships that we have made through the 12 process of the application. 13 Next slide, please. 14 Juntos, which means "together." 15 Our commitment to Inspira. The Inspira 16 team is dedicated to providing rich, empowering 17 educational experiences. These experiences foster 18 bilingualism, ignite curiosity, and develop the next 19 generation of STEAM thinkers and leaders. Inspira 20 aims not just to open up a school, but to plant the 21 seeds of change, growth, and opportunity for every 22 child in the community. 23 Next slide, please. 24 I would like to state my gratitude to all 25 the folks that are here today. The fact that you</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">26</p> <p>1 are this panel also shows that you are invested in 2 giving the children of New Mexico the best 3 opportunities possible. 4 At Inspira, we will have students with the 5 top languages spoken in the world, who are also 6 well-versed in the STEAM fields in both languages. 7 We will have students and professionals who remain 8 in our country and who are bilingual and bicultural. 9 And this is a gift for the future. 10 (Spanish spoken.) 11 Thank you for your love and your time for 12 education. 13 THE CHAIR: Thank you. 14 All right. Thank you. That will take us 15 to Item C, comments from the school district. And I 16 want to pause for a second and see if there is 17 anybody from Las Cruces Public Schools, either 18 present or online. Or any other school district in 19 the area is also fine. You can come up to the 20 podium here. Thank you. And you have up to 21 ten minutes. 22 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, 23 Commissioners. My name is Joseph Flores. I serve 24 as the Director of Fine Arts for Las Cruces Public 25 Schools.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">28</p> <p>1 after-school and summer options. 2 Peer review found Inspira's application 3 lacks specific implementation of Yazzie-Martinez 4 mandates and did not explain what equitable access 5 or ongoing community engagement would look like. 6 In regard to special education and student 7 support services, LCPS has a robust, fully staffed 8 special education infrastructure, including the 9 following: teachers, ancillary providers, 10 diagnosticians, social workers, and supports for 11 IEPs, gifted students, autism spectrum needs, and 12 more. 13 LCPS budgets for and provides Function 14 2100, which is support services for students, and 15 all related staffing and professional development. 16 Inspira's application includes no budget 17 for special education beyond one teacher, no funding 18 for ancillary staff, and fails to align special 19 education goals with instructional plans. 20 In regard to arts education in LCPS -- 21 this is the "A" in S-T-E-A-M -- LCPS offers a 22 comprehensive, district-wide fine arts program that 23 charter schools struggle to match. 24 While STEAM models may reference the arts 25 in their name, most charter schools do not have the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">27</p> <p>1 I'm here today out of a concern for the 2 educational opportunities being promised by the 3 proposed Inspira STEAM Academy. 4 LCPS honors choice and supports innovation 5 always. However, LCPS already delivers what Inspira 6 promises, with stronger systems, equitable access, 7 and accountability in place. 8 In regard to equity and the 9 Yazzie-Martinez decision, LCPS is an active 10 participant in New Mexico's statewide response to 11 Yazzie-Martinez, ensuring equity and excellence for 12 the following: 13 English Learners. That's 15.5 percent of 14 our students. 15 Students with disabilities, approximately 16 5,400 students. 17 Economically disadvantaged students, over 18 68 percent of our students. 19 Native American and historically 20 underserved students as well. 21 LCPS already implements the following: 22 Equity councils at every school. 23 Culturally and linguistically responsive 24 instruction. 25 Extended learning time, including</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">29</p> <p>1 resources, staffing, or scheduling capacity to 2 provide dedicated instruction in music, visual arts, 3 theater, and dance at the elementary level. 4 LCPS ensures that every child has access 5 to certified arts educators, not just occasional art 6 projects. 7 Arts education in LCPS is not an add-on; 8 it is a fully integrated instructional priority. 9 LCPS invests in certified fine arts 10 teachers, sequential curriculum, performance and 11 exhibition opportunities, and dedicated facilities. 12 This creates a strong foundation in creativity, 13 expression, and collaboration, skills that enhance 14 learning in STEM fields and beyond. 15 LCPS -- students in LCPS have access to 16 real pathways in the arts, now and in the future, 17 from elementary through the high school. LCPS 18 students can participate in award-winning band, 19 choir, orchestra, theater, dance, and visual arts 20 programs with clear opportunities for advancement, 21 scholarships, and college readiness. 22 Arts integration at LCPS is strategic, not 23 superficial. LCPS students receive -- pardon me. 24 LCPS teachers receive professional 25 learning and coaching in integrating the arts across</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">30</p> <p>1 subjects in meaningful standards-based ways. Fine</p> <p>2 arts is not reserved for select students or campuses</p> <p>3 in LCPS. All children, regardless of ZIP Code,</p> <p>4 receive access to certified instruction in the arts.</p> <p>5 LCPS fine arts students are recognized</p> <p>6 regionally and nationally. LCPS students regularly</p> <p>7 earn top honors in all state music ensembles,</p> <p>8 district and state art shows, regional theater</p> <p>9 competitions, and national scholarship programs.</p> <p>10 These accolades are a reflection of the</p> <p>11 sustained high-quality instruction LCPS offers.</p> <p>12 Inspira presents itself as a bilingual,</p> <p>13 STEAM-focused school. Yet a closer review of its</p> <p>14 application reveals a glaring omission. The "A" in</p> <p>15 STEAM, arts. It's treated as an afterthought, not a</p> <p>16 color. There is no staffing plan for licensed</p> <p>17 visual or performing arts teachers, no dedicated</p> <p>18 curriculum aligned to New Mexico fine arts</p> <p>19 standards, no specific programs beyond general</p> <p>20 references to hands-on or project-based learning,</p> <p>21 and no clear budget allocations for sustained arts</p> <p>22 instruction.</p> <p>23 Inspira's arts vision rests on</p> <p>24 aspirational language, not implementable</p> <p>25 infrastructure, promising bilingual STEAM education</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">32</p> <p>1 A licensed and experienced superintendent</p> <p>2 board of education with fiduciary oversight and</p> <p>3 public transparency, full services, including</p> <p>4 transportation, food service, and child nutrition</p> <p>5 programs.</p> <p>6 LCPS ensures professional learning and</p> <p>7 licensure for all roles, clear systems for progress</p> <p>8 monitoring, accountability, and finance.</p> <p>9 Peer reviewers cited major gaps in</p> <p>10 Inspira's proposal, include missing financial</p> <p>11 oversight, insufficient budget for food services,</p> <p>12 and no clear plan for governance training, and no</p> <p>13 licensed administrator on record.</p> <p>14 Regarding meeting community needs:</p> <p>15 LCPS already serves East Mesa campuses;</p> <p>16 the following: Sonoma, Desert Hills, Coronado, Loma</p> <p>17 Heights, Cesar Chavez, Sunrise, Highland, and Monte</p> <p>18 Vista, through -- all those campuses -- through</p> <p>19 inclusive enrollment, bilingual support -- and in</p> <p>20 terms of bilingual support, five of those six</p> <p>21 elementary schools on the East Mesa offer dual</p> <p>22 language. The sixth school is implementing a</p> <p>23 dual-language program beginning with kindergarten</p> <p>24 during this coming school year, '25-'26.</p> <p>25 We also offer STEAM-aligned programming,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">31</p> <p>1 without credentialed art staff or instructional time</p> <p>2 for the arts misleads families, and, ultimately,</p> <p>3 shortchanges students of a full, creative,</p> <p>4 well-rounded music education.</p> <p>5 In regard to bilingual and STEAM</p> <p>6 programming, LCPS currently offers dual language and</p> <p>7 bilingual instruction at multiple elementary</p> <p>8 schools. Access to STEAM-integrated learning</p> <p>9 through Challenger Center, coding clubs, science</p> <p>10 fairs, and partnerships with NMSU, NASA, and</p> <p>11 Spaceport America.</p> <p>12 LCPS students benefit from certified</p> <p>13 bilingual teachers, standards-aligned curriculum in</p> <p>14 English and Spanish, performance-based assessments</p> <p>15 already in practice.</p> <p>16 Inspira proposes an 80/20 bilingual STEAM</p> <p>17 model that gradually shifts to 50/50. But the</p> <p>18 application lacks clear curricular alignment,</p> <p>19 literacy balance, or supports for non-Spanish ELLs,</p> <p>20 English Language Learners or emergent bilingual</p> <p>21 students.</p> <p>22 In regard to governance, compliance, and</p> <p>23 capacity, LCPS is fully compliant with LEA -- pardon</p> <p>24 me -- compliant -- is a compliant LEA with the</p> <p>25 following:</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">33</p> <p>1 LCPS schools are working daily to achieve -- to</p> <p>2 close achievement gaps with data-driven supports and</p> <p>3 systemwide accountability.</p> <p>4 And then, also, of course, we recently</p> <p>5 redistricted our entire school district to</p> <p>6 accommodate community growth.</p> <p>7 The absence of a bilingual STEAM school</p> <p>8 does not equate to need. Inspira's application</p> <p>9 lacks clear evidence of demand, academic readiness,</p> <p>10 and fiscal sustainability.</p> <p>11 In closing, again, LCPS already delivers</p> <p>12 what Inspira promises with stronger systems,</p> <p>13 equitable access, and accountability in place.</p> <p>14 We support choice and innovation, as I</p> <p>15 said at the beginning. But we also believe in</p> <p>16 responsible stewardship of public education.</p> <p>17 LCPS stands ready to meet the needs of all</p> <p>18 students on the East Mesa and beyond.</p> <p>19 Thank you so much for allowing me to speak</p> <p>20 today.</p> <p>21 THE CHAIR: Thank you. If there's anyone</p> <p>22 else from any other school district -- I just want</p> <p>23 to give a second to make sure.</p> <p>24 All right. Thank you.</p> <p>25 That'll take us to Item D. Any comments</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">34</p> <p>1 from any tribal authorities? If you are here in an 2 a official capacity as a representative of a tribe 3 or tribal leadership, if you can come forward now. 4 Or you can -- if you're online, you could raise your 5 digital hand. 6 (No response.) 7 THE CHAIR: Okay. Seeing none, that will 8 take us to our Comments from the Public. And we 9 will do our two minutes per speaker or group. 10 MS. MELISSA BROWN: So we have eight 11 people on the Zoom, and we have nineteen people 12 online -- or in the room. Who would you like to 13 start with? 14 THE CHAIR: Let's go ahead and start with 15 the online folks and get them -- 16 MS. MELISSA BROWN: All right. Our first 17 speaker online is Hope Morales. Please remember to 18 spell your last name. And I will tell you when your 19 two minutes is up. 20 FROM THE PUBLIC: Good morning. Can you 21 hear me? 22 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Yes, we can. Please 23 spell your name. 24 FROM THE PUBLIC: Okay. Hope Morales. 25 M-o-r-a-l-e-s.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">36</p> <p>1 wages, and plenty of post-secondary educational and 2 training support. 3 Cyber security, software development, and 4 data science offer especially bright prospects. 5 Training for these careers doesn't start 6 after high school. Students need a strong 7 foundation in order to acquire the skills and 8 knowledge that they need to participate in this 9 workforce. 10 New Mexico data indicates that students 11 who are attending charter schools are outperforming 12 students at traditional public schools. 13 Expansion -- expansion at these schools 14 and approvals for promising schools will give more 15 students immediate access to high-quality school 16 systems. 17 Las Cruces families don't currently have 18 an option for schools like Inspira STEAM Academy. 19 This school will serve as an innovative model to 20 help ensure students have access to a unique 21 education that will create a strong foundation for 22 high-need, high-paying careers in Las Cruces. 23 I stand in support, not of charter 24 schools, but of the promise and plans for effective 25 schools.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">35</p> <p>1 Good morning, Madam Chair and 2 Commissioners. My name is Hope Morales. And I'm 3 the executive director of Teach Plus New Mexico. 4 I'm a former local school board member, a parent of 5 two children attending public schools and a son in 6 college. 7 I work with hundreds of great teachers 8 across the state to improve educational systems, 9 getting more students access to a high-quality 10 educational environment. 11 We can't expect our children to do better 12 if they don't know better. Instead of being limited 13 by their experiences, I believe that it is our 14 collective responsibility to foster aspirations 15 beyond the barriers that our students face, create 16 real pathways for their futures, and equip them with 17 the skills and understanding of what it takes to 18 achieve their dreams. 19 The Inspira STEAM Academy's mission to 20 provide a bilingual education embedded with the 21 curriculum focused on STEAM, aligned with a 22 community need related to STEAM employment 23 opportunities. 24 Las Cruces is emerging as a robust STEAM 25 hub, with a strong employment growth, competitive</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">37</p> <p>1 MS. MELISSA BROWN: That is time. 2 FROM THE PUBLIC: Thank you. 3 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Rebecca 4 Felix. If you'll wait just a second for me to 5 promote you. Rebecca, you can speak now. 6 FROM THE PUBLIC: Hi. My name is Rebecca 7 Felix. F-e-l-i-x. 8 And I support charter schools because they 9 offer an innovative approach that better fits my 10 children's needs. 11 I currently have six children. And we 12 have tried Las Cruces Public Schools, and, right 13 now, I have them at Explore Academy and Mesilla 14 Valley Leadership Academy. So I appreciate there 15 being other options in Cruces for my students' 16 individual needs. 17 My youngest daughter, I really would have 18 appreciated a school with a good bilingual program. 19 She was adopted from Colombia in 2019. And we tried 20 having her in a bilingual program here in our school 21 district. 22 However, she has some special needs and 23 some developmental delays, and so she wasn't able to 24 continue at the bilingual program. But I think she 25 could really have benefited to be able to maintain</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">38</p> <p>1 her Spanish-speaking skills, because she has lost 2 all of that at this point.</p> <p>3 But it's important to me that my kids are 4 exposed to a well-rounded education that prepares 5 them for the future. I would really be excited to 6 see a STEAM-focused school like this opening in 7 Las Cruces. So thank you.</p> <p>8 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you very much. 9 Next we have Erica Bearman.</p> <p>10 FROM THE PUBLIC: Good morning, 11 Madam Chair and Commissioners. My name is Erica 12 Bearman. B-e-a-r-m-a-n.</p> <p>13 I come to you today with my strong support 14 for the establishment of Inspira Steam Academy in 15 Las Cruces, New Mexico.</p> <p>16 As a former bilingual educator, both in 17 the Albuquerque Public Schools and the Pittsburgh 18 Public Schools, where I organized and founded an 19 after-school program called the Young Einstein 20 Science Club in partnership with the Carnegie 21 Libraries, I know firsthand how vitally important it 22 is to give students the opportunity to experience 23 STEAM in a bilingual manner.</p> <p>24 When we think about Las Cruces and we 25 think about the fact that 77 percent of the students</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">40</p> <p>1 I believe Ms. Julia Tapia and her vision 2 for Inspira, the bilingual STEAM school in 3 Las Cruces, would open doors and create new 4 opportunities for all of our students in Las Cruces. 5 This school is exactly what Las Cruces students and 6 families need to engage and empower success, while 7 also promoting bilingualism and biliteracy.</p> <p>8 As an educator, Ms. Tapia has been a 9 strong leader and advocate for bilingual education 10 and for STEAM. She is also, in my opinion, the most 11 qualified and passionate educator I know that could 12 and would bring this vision to fruition for our 13 deserving families in Las Cruces.</p> <p>14 Thank you.</p> <p>15 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Okay. Next we have 16 Dr. Jenn Peña.</p> <p>17 FROM THE PUBLIC: Hi. My name is Dr. Jenn 18 Peña. Last name is P-e-ñ-a.</p> <p>19 And then I am also speaking in support of 20 Inspira Academy. And from -- with my work, I work 21 as a consultant for a lot of different charter 22 schools across New Mexico. And I am a huge 23 supporter of options for families.</p> <p>24 I think that one of the most important 25 things you can do as a parent is be able to choose</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">39</p> <p>1 are of Mexican-American or Hispanic heritage, this 2 becomes a vitally important opportunity for them.</p> <p>3 Charter schools in New Mexico provide 4 flexibility to implement innovative curricula 5 tailored to the community's unique needs. They 6 allow this integration of cultural elements and 7 responsive teaching methods to resonate with our 8 students' experiences.</p> <p>9 Supporting a bilingual STEAM charter 10 school in Las Cruces is an investment in all of our 11 futures and a commitment to preserving the rich 12 cultural tapestry of our communities.</p> <p>13 So I say let's come together and make this 14 vision a reality, ensuring that our students are 15 well equipped to thrive in the diverse -- excuse 16 me -- our diverse and ever evolving world. (Spanish 17 spoken.)</p> <p>18 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you. Next, we 19 have Maricela Rincon. Apologies if I'm not -- 20 whoops -- there we go.</p> <p>21 FROM THE PUBLIC: Good morning.</p> <p>22 MS. MELISSA BROWN: There you go.</p> <p>23 FROM THE PUBLIC: Good morning. My name 24 is Maricela Rincon. R-i-n-c-o-n. And I am a strong 25 supporter of Inspira.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">41</p> <p>1 the best option of where your child can go to 2 school, where your child is going to thrive, and 3 where your child is going to get the skills that you 4 feel they need and that are important to you and 5 your family.</p> <p>6 In las Cruces, currently, there are a few 7 options. But we also know that there are waitlists, 8 and there is not an option for students to be able 9 to have an elementary experience that is bilingual 10 and focused on STEAM.</p> <p>11 And I think that that's a critical -- a 12 critical decision and a critical piece there.</p> <p>13 There are -- I have family members that 14 are within Las Cruces Public Schools. Some of them 15 have done well; some of them have not done as well. 16 Again, just really limited opportunities for the 17 families to be able to choose.</p> <p>18 I think that Inspira will be able to 19 provide cultural needs, be able to provide students 20 that are -- or be able to prepare students for a 21 world that is multilingual. And then be able to 22 focus on the STEAM components. And being able to 23 prepare them for going into high school and then 24 being able to go into the post-secondary options, 25 this is -- this is a terrific opportunity.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">42</p> <p>1 And being able to focus more on, like I</p> <p>2 said, the math and the science pieces of that, I</p> <p>3 think that that's a really critical piece that you</p> <p>4 are missing as an option for parents in Las Cruces.</p> <p>5 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you. So, next,</p> <p>6 I have Dr. Malu [ph] Gonzales. But I believe that</p> <p>7 you are attending under the name Maria Luisa</p> <p>8 Gonzales. I hope that is correct.</p> <p>9 FROM THE PUBLIC: Yes, it is.</p> <p>10 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Go ahead. Spell your</p> <p>11 name and then go ahead.</p> <p>12 FROM THE PUBLIC: My apologies. I'm</p> <p>13 suffering from a bad cold that I caught in the state</p> <p>14 of Washington as I'm spending the summer here. And</p> <p>15 I'm having an opportunity to serve on a board in --</p> <p>16 of another charter school in Las Cruces.</p> <p>17 I need to preempt that I've been a -- an</p> <p>18 educator for over fifty years. I've worked</p> <p>19 everything from K-12 and ended my career, thirty</p> <p>20 years with a public university, NMSU. And I also</p> <p>21 worked at other universities and accreditation</p> <p>22 agencies.</p> <p>23 I had an opportunity, again, to meet</p> <p>24 Dr. Julia Rivera-Tapia and work with her at another</p> <p>25 charter school that she led. I was familiar with</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">44</p> <p>1 FROM THE PUBLIC: Thank you so much. I</p> <p>2 strongly support them.</p> <p>3 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Bethany</p> <p>4 Rausch. Just trying to find you, Bethany. I cannot</p> <p>5 find Bethan Rausch anymore.</p> <p>6 So, finally, we have Francisco Arias.</p> <p>7 Francisco, if you would like to unmute</p> <p>8 yourself and make your public comment. And please</p> <p>9 spell your last name.</p> <p>10 Francisco is declining. That moves us to</p> <p>11 the room.</p> <p>12 Do you want me to do that? All right.</p> <p>13 THE CHAIR: All right. Sandra Sepulveda.</p> <p>14 And then next, we'll have Yessi Rivera-Tapia,</p> <p>15 Yovanni Rivera-Tapia, and Luis Rivera.</p> <p>16 If you all want to line up, we'll get you</p> <p>17 on. Ready?</p> <p>18 FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. My name</p> <p>19 is Sandra Sepulveda. S-e-p-u-l-v-e-d-a.</p> <p>20 I'm here not only as a community member,</p> <p>21 but, most importantly, as a grandmother.</p> <p>22 I'm standing in support of the Inspira</p> <p>23 STEAM Academy because I have seen firsthand what</p> <p>24 happens to our children when they lose touch with</p> <p>25 their roots.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">43</p> <p>1 her work at another charter school in Albuquerque.</p> <p>2 She is a true leader. She's inspired me</p> <p>3 to return out of retirement and help out the schools</p> <p>4 as much as I can.</p> <p>5 The team that she has is incredible. I've</p> <p>6 been a public school educator, absolutely, and</p> <p>7 thoroughly support all the schools. But this school</p> <p>8 promises to bring the children the success that they</p> <p>9 need, and it would help inspire other schools to do</p> <p>10 the same.</p> <p>11 I trust that the program they're proposing</p> <p>12 has every element for success of every child,</p> <p>13 whether they are early English language speakers or</p> <p>14 promising to become bilingual students, or they come</p> <p>15 to school only speaking Spanish. Every single need</p> <p>16 that they have will be covered at the school.</p> <p>17 Nothing is perfect. And we try as much as</p> <p>18 we can to offer different elements for children to</p> <p>19 learn nowadays. All of us are committed in that.</p> <p>20 But this promises, in a smaller</p> <p>21 environment, in a place that's highly needing,</p> <p>22 again, the sciences, the arts, and the dual language</p> <p>23 program.</p> <p>24 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you. That's</p> <p>25 your two minutes.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">45</p> <p>1 My grandson lost his home language, our</p> <p>2 native language, and with it, a part of our culture.</p> <p>3 That's why I'm so grateful that Inspira is bringing</p> <p>4 bilingual education back.</p> <p>5 It's not just about words; it's about</p> <p>6 identity, connection, and pride.</p> <p>7 Inspira STEAM Academy's dual language</p> <p>8 program is so needed for our community, especially</p> <p>9 for the little ones. It can change so many lives.</p> <p>10 The children will not be intimidated, and they'll be</p> <p>11 able to be confident in school at such a young age.</p> <p>12 I also have grandchildren on the autism</p> <p>13 spectrum. Inspira gives me hope, a school that</p> <p>14 supports STEAM, science, technology, education,</p> <p>15 engineering, arts, and math, is a school that</p> <p>16 understands how to ignite a child's curiosity,</p> <p>17 especially those with unique minds.</p> <p>18 It's not just about forcing them to fit</p> <p>19 into a system. It stands about building a system</p> <p>20 that fits to them.</p> <p>21 With the right support and the right</p> <p>22 environment, our children cannot only keep up with</p> <p>23 their typical peers; they can shine right alongside</p> <p>24 them. They can grow into confident learners,</p> <p>25 problem-solvers, and active members of our</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">46</p> <p>1 community.</p> <p>2 Inspira STEAM Academy just isn't about a</p> <p>3 school. It's a chance that gives every child,</p> <p>4 including my grandchildren, the opportunity to</p> <p>5 thrive.</p> <p>6 Thank you, all.</p> <p>7 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Yessi.</p> <p>8 And then if I can ask Delia Candelaria to line up</p> <p>9 next.</p> <p>10 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is</p> <p>11 Yessi, and I'm here as a student.</p> <p>12 THE CHAIR: Yessi, I'm sorry. Can you go</p> <p>13 ahead and do your last name as well?</p> <p>14 FROM THE FLOOR: Last name is Rivera,</p> <p>15 R-i-e-v- -- I forgot my name. That's okay.</p> <p>16 THE CHAIR: I think Cindy knows "Rivera."</p> <p>17 She's pretty good.</p> <p>18 FROM THE FLOOR: When I was in</p> <p>19 kindergarten, it was COVID, so I really didn't get</p> <p>20 to learn a lot of Spanish. And when I got to first</p> <p>21 grade, I learned a lot of it. And as I went up to</p> <p>22 second grade it kind of like vanished.</p> <p>23 And I believe if I had this opportunity to</p> <p>24 go to Inspira when I was in kindergarten, I would</p> <p>25 never forget it, because they would inspire me to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">48</p> <p>1 going to Inspira will be able to learn Spanish</p> <p>2 growing up, and so that they don't forget their</p> <p>3 roots, either. Thank you.</p> <p>4 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Luis?</p> <p>5 And Autumn Amador, you can go get in line.</p> <p>6 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, Madam Chair</p> <p>7 and members of the Public Education Commission. My</p> <p>8 name is Luis Rivera. R-i-v-e-r-a.</p> <p>9 I stand before you as a proud husband of</p> <p>10 an awesome educator and community leader in</p> <p>11 Ms. Tapia. I'm also a very proud father of three</p> <p>12 beautiful kids. You saw two of them.</p> <p>13 My oldest one is on a fast track to</p> <p>14 graduating from Arrowhead with -- graduating high</p> <p>15 school from Arrowhead with a college degree. And</p> <p>16 for that, I'm very grateful.</p> <p>17 My middle one is in Mesilla Valley</p> <p>18 Leadership Academy, and my baby just finished a year</p> <p>19 in John Paul Taylor Academy.</p> <p>20 Members of the board, I respectfully urge</p> <p>21 the Commission to consider establishing Inspira</p> <p>22 elementary school with focus on STEAM education.</p> <p>23 Our community's youth deserve access to innovative</p> <p>24 learning, environments that nurture curiosity,</p> <p>25 critical thinking, and creativity across science,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">47</p> <p>1 learn Spanish my whole entire life.</p> <p>2 Thank you.</p> <p>3 THE CHAIR: Go ahead.</p> <p>4 Enrique Avalos, if you want to come up and</p> <p>5 stand in line?</p> <p>6 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is</p> <p>7 Yovanni Rivera-Tapia. So Rivera, R-i-v-e-r-a.</p> <p>8 Rivera.</p> <p>9 I'm here to discuss mom's school. I think</p> <p>10 that it's a great opportunity to give kids the</p> <p>11 chance to speak Spanish, especially in a borderland.</p> <p>12 There's -- when you speak two languages, it opens a</p> <p>13 lot of doors that only knowing one language would</p> <p>14 not open; so possibly going to a different school,</p> <p>15 getting opportunities and possibly chances that are</p> <p>16 life changing.</p> <p>17 Knowing Spanish growing up has helped me a</p> <p>18 lot to open -- open up all my feelings with my</p> <p>19 family and friends. It helps me in my community a</p> <p>20 lot, knowing that people around me also speak</p> <p>21 Spanish.</p> <p>22 And I've been practicing Spanish a lot,</p> <p>23 because, growing up, I did speak Spanish, but now</p> <p>24 it's kind of slipping. And I want to stay true to</p> <p>25 my roots. So it's a great opportunity that kids</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">49</p> <p>1 technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics from</p> <p>2 an early age.</p> <p>3 With the rapid evolution of today's job</p> <p>4 market and technological landscape, it's essential</p> <p>5 to equip our students with interdisciplinary skills</p> <p>6 that prepare them to be problem-solvers and</p> <p>7 innovators.</p> <p>8 Inspira, a STEAM-based elementary school,</p> <p>9 would not only alleviate overcrowding in local</p> <p>10 classrooms, but also empower students to thrive in</p> <p>11 the global economy. Investment in this initiative</p> <p>12 demonstrates a forward-thinking commitment to</p> <p>13 education, excellence, and offers families an</p> <p>14 exciting path to reach academic and personal</p> <p>15 development.</p> <p>16 Thank you all for considering.</p> <p>17 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Delia.</p> <p>18 And in line will be Dr. Adam Amador.</p> <p>19 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. My name is</p> <p>20 Delia Candelaria. C-a-n-d-e-l-a-r-i-a. I am a</p> <p>21 parent of a 19-year-old graduating from Las Cruces</p> <p>22 Public School District, starting at a charter school</p> <p>23 from first grade up till fifth grade. And I plead</p> <p>24 you to vote yes for starting a new charter school.</p> <p>25 It is an invaluable option for parents to</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">50</p> <p>1 have an opportunity to choose more individualized</p> <p>2 learning and also have a focus in Spanish.</p> <p>3 I am also a C -- chief operating officer</p> <p>4 of Del Valle Physical Therapy, which is a physical</p> <p>5 therapy clinic here in Las Cruces. And all of our</p> <p>6 administrative staff is primarily encouraged to</p> <p>7 speak Spanish.</p> <p>8 So the fact that we have a school that is</p> <p>9 going to be teaching students to be full and</p> <p>10 bilingual is absolutely amazing, because not all</p> <p>11 students go to college. Some of them work other</p> <p>12 jobs and other positions.</p> <p>13 And so having that opportunity for the</p> <p>14 community, but not even Las Cruces, throughout the</p> <p>15 country.</p> <p>16 Las Cruces happens to be an area that's</p> <p>17 highly concentrated in Hispanic culture. But if you</p> <p>18 go outside of Las Cruces, having that Spanish and</p> <p>19 bilingual is invaluable. They will be one in few</p> <p>20 that will have an opportunity to be able to speak</p> <p>21 all their languages.</p> <p>22 So I implore you to please approve the</p> <p>23 charter school. It's an amazing opportunity for</p> <p>24 Las Cruces. My daughter is now starting her physics</p> <p>25 degree. So thank you.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">52</p> <p>1 to California. I am somebody who is not a native</p> <p>2 Spanish speaker. I am learning as I serve my</p> <p>3 students, because I need to be able to speak it to</p> <p>4 serve my students.</p> <p>5 So I -- I am a big believer in the</p> <p>6 bilingual education model, simply because our</p> <p>7 students deserve to continue their language.</p> <p>8 Unfortunately, I lost mine, and,</p> <p>9 hopefully, I'm going to get it back. But if our</p> <p>10 students can maintain that, not only will they be</p> <p>11 able to thrive here in New Mexico, in Las Cruces,</p> <p>12 but globally, as well, because, obviously, both</p> <p>13 languages are major factors on the global stage.</p> <p>14 Thank you.</p> <p>15 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Autumn.</p> <p>16 And in line will be Alyssa Parra.</p> <p>17 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, Madam Chair</p> <p>18 and fellow Public Education Commissioners. My name</p> <p>19 is Autumn Amador. A-m-a-d-o-r. I am here in</p> <p>20 support of Inspira STEAM Academy. In my experience,</p> <p>21 as an elementary student in the local school</p> <p>22 district, I believe the Inspira STEAM Academy is a</p> <p>23 perfect school for students like me who wish to</p> <p>24 pursue a career in STEAM.</p> <p>25 If you can imagine, as a young aspiring</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">51</p> <p>1 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Enrique.</p> <p>2 And in line will be Natalia Guilmino.</p> <p>3 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning. Or</p> <p>4 afternoon. I'm not sure anymore.</p> <p>5 My name is Enrique Avalos. That's</p> <p>6 A-v-a-l-o-s. I am a proud Aggie. I got my</p> <p>7 bachelor's and master's here. But I went and have</p> <p>8 educated in Texas for the past eight years.</p> <p>9 I've served as a teacher; I've served as a</p> <p>10 school administrator and as a district</p> <p>11 administrator.</p> <p>12 As a charter school administrator, I have</p> <p>13 found some amazing, you know, qualities within the</p> <p>14 charter system, including a collaboration with our</p> <p>15 local public school district in El Paso. So I want</p> <p>16 to encourage the approval of Inspira STEAM Academy,</p> <p>17 not just for the benefit of the students who will be</p> <p>18 there, but in the collaboration of Inspira along</p> <p>19 with the local public school districts, because the</p> <p>20 entire purpose of the charter world is to create</p> <p>21 innovation that will lead to our public schools that</p> <p>22 serve our state even better.</p> <p>23 I am a product of, I think, six public</p> <p>24 school districts until I graduated from high school,</p> <p>25 going from New Jersey on the East Coast all the way</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">53</p> <p>1 astronaut in the first grade, I was scoring in the</p> <p>2 99 percentile and reading between a fourth- and</p> <p>3 fifth-grade level. I was told by my local district</p> <p>4 that I was neither advanced, bright, or gifted.</p> <p>5 I feel that if I was attending a school</p> <p>6 such as Inspira, my advanced, bright, and gifted</p> <p>7 talent would have been amplified by the Inspira</p> <p>8 education team under the direction of Ms. Julia</p> <p>9 Tapia-Rivera.</p> <p>10 I urge you to approve this school so other</p> <p>11 aspiring STEAM students can be approved (verbatim)</p> <p>12 the high quality education that they deserve. Thank</p> <p>13 you.</p> <p>14 THE CHAIR: Dr. Amador. Dr. Amador. And</p> <p>15 then in line will be Alyssa Parra.</p> <p>16 FROM THE FLOOR: Dr. Adam Amador.</p> <p>17 A-m-a-d-o-r.</p> <p>18 So I have a little bit of experience. But</p> <p>19 I want to come to you today in support of this</p> <p>20 wonderful charter school. (Spanish spoken.) So</p> <p>21 those who speak two languages are worth two people.</p> <p>22 In our experience here in Las Cruces, and</p> <p>23 as a father, as the chair of the Hispanic Education</p> <p>24 Advisory Council, as a chair for the ALAS,</p> <p>25 Association of Latino Administrators and</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">54</p> <p>1 Superintendents, this school is needed. It's in 2 response to Yazzie-Martinez, but not only that, to 3 House Bill 487 and identity. 4 You're hearing that a lot today. Language 5 is a huge part of identity, and it's taken. 6 So to hear other colleagues say that -- 7 sure, some things are provided. But I will tell you 8 that Alma students win awards statewide, regionally. 9 You guys have been witness to that. 10 We host international mariachi groups, 11 national mariachi groups. We host jazz. So to say 12 that none of that is going on outside of LCPS is not 13 accurate. And I want to make that very clear. Us, 14 as a charter school, without any resources or 15 support, we make those things happen for our kids. 16 So I want to make sure that we share that 17 point today. Charter schools make things happen for 18 kids that otherwise are not happening anywhere else. 19 And that's why approving this school and 20 this charter today is going to be very powerful, not 21 only for this committee, but for the students in the 22 city of Las Cruces. So thank you very much. We 23 appreciate your time. 24 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Natalia, 25 Natalia. And in line, I can't read the first name,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">56</p> <p>1 My child went from refusing to complete 2 work and participate in school activities to writing 3 paragraphs in Spanish and cursive in less than a 4 year. She will also be playing the cello next year 5 at ten years old. 6 I never thought I would be able to say my 7 daughter loves going to school. But she will 8 pretend she's not sick to avoid missing a day. 9 A smaller school environment is desirable 10 for families like mine, because it reduces stress 11 from too much sensory input of just so many kids, 12 and gives educators the flexibility to meet 13 children's unique needs and use creative approaches 14 to support learning. 15 My daughter is proof that the founders of 16 Inspira truly care about their students and have the 17 passion and creativity to make school a positive 18 experience and support their development. 19 Their program is exciting because it will 20 not only give children more opportunities in the 21 STEAM fields; but a bilingual education will give 22 them an advantage in their future careers. 23 The Las Cruces community, particularly the 24 special needs population, desperately needs this 25 option, and they have my unwavering support. Thank</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">55</p> <p>1 but the last name is "Hatcher." 2 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. My name is Natalia 3 Guilmino. It's G-u-i-l-m-i-n-o. 4 I am a freelance real estate assistant, 5 co-chair of the parental advisory committee at 6 J. Paul Taylor Academy, served on the equity council 7 at Alameda Elementary and now at J. Paul Taylor 8 Academy, and am part of the median [ph] panel at 9 NMSU that trains school-based evaluators for autism 10 in rural areas of New Mexico. 11 My most important job, however, is being a 12 mom to an energetic and curious toddler who you all 13 are very familiar with by now, and an autistic 14 nine-year-old with coexisting ADHD and multiple food 15 allergies. 16 I am here to support Inspira STEAM Academy 17 and promote school choice for families like mine who 18 have historically had no choice in this community 19 but to send their student with unique needs to a 20 school environment that's not built for them. I 21 have a unique perspective, as my daughter has 22 attended a traditional public -- LCPS -- and a 23 charter school. And to say that she has absolutely 24 thrived in a charter school environment is an 25 understatement.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">57</p> <p>1 you for your time. 2 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next we have 3 Alyssa Parra. And in line is Sandy Lind. 4 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. I'm Alyssa Parra. 5 P-a-r-r-a. And I'm just going to share my 6 experience with the charter and public schools. My 7 elementary years were filled with great 8 opportunities that most didn't get because I went to 9 a charter school. 10 I went to a traditional middle school and 11 now a high school so I can pursue athletics. 12 Transitioning from a charter to a traditional public 13 school showed me just how good charter schools can 14 be for preparing students like myself by using 15 project-based learning to help me work in teams 16 along with frequent presentations that helped me 17 with my public speaking. 18 Although all of this sounds great, I never 19 really had opportunities for STEAM or bilingual 20 opportunities, especially in public school 21 environments, where these programs felt really 22 underdeveloped and schools lacked personal attention 23 to students. 24 Charter schools give students more 25 attention, because they're smaller. And with</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">58</p> <p>1 bilingual access, it would provide even more support 2 to students.</p> <p>3 During my transition from charter to 4 public schools, I learned that I was basically that 5 kid who wanted to do group projects. So if anyone 6 needs a professional overachiever, you can talk to 7 my seventh-grade class.</p> <p>8 I support Inspira STEAM Academy as a 9 school option because, as a former charter kid, I 10 feel a STEAM program would have absolutely helped 11 me, and I'd have more opportunities that I didn't 12 get. And I think you should support Inspira, too.</p> <p>13 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We have Isaiah 14 next. Isaiah Parra. And then, in line will be 15 Beatriz Mendoza -- Mendoza.</p> <p>16 FROM THE FLOOR: My name is Isaiah Parra. 17 P-a-r-r-a. I think that going to charter schools is 18 important, because I've gone to many charter 19 schools, and I like them more than when I went to 20 traditional public school. Because of the small 21 environment of a charter school, I was able to make 22 friends with all of the people in my grade, and I 23 still talk to them weekly to this day, which I've 24 heard is very rare to have that kind of connection 25 with your middle-school friends.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">60</p> <p>1 several economic benefits to the area. For one, it 2 can create jobs for teachers, staff, and 3 administrators, which can help stimulate the local 4 economy activity. Additionally, schools can attract 5 families and businesses to the area, which can lead 6 to increased investment in housing, retail, and 7 other local services.</p> <p>8 Inspira can also partner with local 9 businesses and organizations, fostering economic 10 development, and providing opportunities for 11 students to gain practical experience.</p> <p>12 This can all contribute to a stronger, 13 more vibrant local economy. I strongly support 14 Inspira. Thank you for your time.</p> <p>15 THE CHAIR: Thank you. The next speaker 16 has a last name of "Hatcher." 17 And then in the line will be Tessa 18 Penn-Smith.</p> <p>19 FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name 20 I-can't-say-the-first-name Hatcher. No. It's 21 Trinell, T-r-i-n-e-l-l. And my last name is 22 H-a-t-c-h-e-r.</p> <p>23 I'm a mechanical engineer for Lockheed out 24 at White Sands. And when my wife let me know about 25 the opportunity to -- for them to develop this</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">59</p> <p>1 I also support Inspira, because they 2 genuinely want to teach their kids, and not just to 3 have them pass, but to set them up for their future 4 and in other schools and situations.</p> <p>5 With their STEAM focus and bilingual 6 teaching, I believe that the kids who go here will 7 be ready for anything academic that comes their way. 8 And I believe that Inspira will be a great addition 9 to the charter schools in Las Cruces.</p> <p>10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. All right. 11 Next, last name, Hatcher. I can't wait to 12 see your first name.</p> <p>13 And then Stephanie Chaisson, maybe?</p> <p>14 FROM THE FLOOR: Chaisson (pronounced).</p> <p>15 THE CHAIR: Thank you.</p> <p>16 FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. I do 17 believe it is afternoon. I am a community auntie 18 and -- great auntie. And I have a few words.</p> <p>19 Inspira in Las Cruces --</p> <p>20 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry. If you don't mind 21 giving your first and last name and then spelling 22 the last --</p> <p>23 FROM THE FLOOR: I'm sorry. I apologize. 24 My name is Beatriz Mendoza. M-e-n-d-o-o-z-a. 25 And Inspira in Las Cruces can bring</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">61</p> <p>1 Inspira Academy, I thought that was really 2 interesting to do a STEAM academy, which we grew up 3 with STEM, but adding the arts to it, as well as 4 being a bilingual program. That greatly aligns with 5 the bloom of engineering, art, and everything that 6 happened during the 1500s in the Renaissance.</p> <p>7 Being bilingual and mainly using the 8 language Spanish, a stepping stone to languages that 9 are prevalent across Europe, will be able to use 10 those documents like Classic Latin to learn science, 11 arts, mathematics, and stuff like that. All that is 12 integrated already into those curriculums. And to 13 have a school focused on that would be great in 14 these times.</p> <p>15 Also, I didn't grow up speaking Spanish. 16 I don't know if that's obvious. But I would love to 17 learn to interact. I took multiple years of Spanish 18 in middle school and high school in El Paso.</p> <p>19 And I have a working knowledge. But it's 20 great to be able to go back and forth between the 21 two languages, and, maybe even more, to be able to 22 interact with business partners worldwide.</p> <p>23 We have to think about this globally. And 24 I think you've got to support the installation of 25 the Inspira Academy.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">62</p> <p>1 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Stephanie. 2 And in line will be Margarita Porter. 3 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. Good morning. 4 Stephanie Chaisson. C-h-a-i-s-s-o-n. As you would 5 can tell, I don't speak Spanish, either; right? 6 Good morning to you all. I am speaking on 7 behalf my niece and nephews today in support of the 8 Inspira STEAM Academy. 9 I want them to have any and all 10 opportunities that a STEAM education provides. The 11 educational balance and wonder that a STEAM platform 12 provides are essential to the youth of today. 13 I am currently employed as an IT 14 administrator for a local radiology group. And from 15 my perspective, it would be awesome to have more 16 females in the IT field. Please give my niece and 17 nephews access to the creativity and technology 18 blend of a STEM education. Thank you. 19 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next is Tessa 20 Penn-Smith. And in line is maybe Jorge Flores? Or 21 definitely a name that starts with a "J" at the 22 beginning. 23 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. I'm Tessa 24 Penn-Smith. Last name P-e-n-n hyphen S-m-i-t-h. 25 I am a former elementary education</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">64</p> <p>1 doors for us to be able to connect to people that we 2 otherwise wouldn't be able to connect with. 3 Bilingual education also increases our 4 awareness. It increases empathy. In this day and 5 age, don't we want to increase our humanity -- 6 right? -- and our connection with others? 7 Bilingual education will uplift total 8 families. It will increase opportunities in the 9 community. And for STEAM education, it is necessary 10 for our children to not only know how to scroll 11 through YouTube or TikTok, but also to be able to 12 produce, to create, to monetize, and to spread good 13 messages and to be a part of this technology world 14 in the future. 15 As kids, I can't imagine a better way to 16 spend a child's day than exploring their own 17 environment to meet their natural desire to explore 18 and inquire about their environment, which has been 19 taken away in some classrooms; right? In some 20 education models. Is that two minutes? 21 THE CHAIR: That's time. 22 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. 23 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Sandy Lind. Sandy 24 Lind? 25 Okay. Margarita.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">63</p> <p>1 teacher, four years in a dual-language classroom, 2 currently, a speech language pathologist working 3 with bilingual communities for the last twelve 4 years. 5 I'm also a mom. And I have three kiddos 6 growing up here in Las Cruces. We have attended 7 charter schools, public school. We've also done 8 homeschool. So we have a variety of experiences. 9 And I will say as a mom, I evaluate every year what 10 I think is best for my kids, what is going to be the 11 best placement for them, what are their needs. 12 And I think that when our kiddos come into 13 school, parents know them best, and they will know 14 what is going to be the best placement for them. 15 Every school, every classroom is a little 16 bit different, as are the needs of all our kids. 17 Specifically talking to bilingualism, I am 18 bilingual, which is surprising to a lot of people 19 sometimes. 20 Bilingualism will offer -- there's a ton 21 of statistics that support bilingual education, 22 including brain plasticity, higher test scores, 23 increased vocabulary. And we could go on and on 24 with a checklist of benefits; right? 25 But more importantly to me, it opened</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">65</p> <p>1 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, Madam 2 President and Commissioners. I'm Margarita Porter, 3 P-o-r-t-e-r. First, I am going to put on my charter 4 school leadership hat and just respond to LCPS. 5 When students are offered an opportunity 6 to go to a smaller school where everyone knows your 7 name, where you can get individualized attention, 8 that's what we call a charter school. 9 If schools -- if LCPS offered that kind of 10 instruction, that kind of support, and that kind of 11 love to our students, there would be no need for 12 charter schools. 13 There are 101 charter schools in 14 New Mexico. So we are in need of options for our 15 families. 16 In a charter school, because we know all 17 of our students, we're able to build those 18 relationships. Our state boasts on the number of 19 bilingual seals on diplomas, and this is a great way 20 to start that. Inspira offers that foundation where 21 students will come in being bilingual and continue 22 on and have a foundation into high school. 23 And now I'm going to talk to you as a 24 parent. All three of my students -- my children, 25 excuse me. All the three of my students were in a</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">66</p> <p>1 bilingual school. They were bilingual growing up. 2 Then my children went on to -- when we were in 3 Albuquerque, they went to Alice King Community 4 School. 5 We moved back home to Las Cruces, and they 6 started at J. Paul Taylor. And my oldest daughter 7 started and finished at New America School. 8 Because this is -- students need 9 individualized learning, and they need a place where 10 they feel loved and cared for. 11 Bilingualism opens up opportunities for 12 jobs, for financial stability, but more so to 13 communicate with their families. Being able to 14 communicate with my mom and the rest of my family, 15 being bilingual was very important to me. And so I 16 am asking you to offer our children in Las Cruces 17 the same opportunity. 18 Thank you. 19 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I'm going to go 20 back again. Sandy Lind from NMSU? 21 No? Okay. I'm going to just skip. 22 All right. Next will be Flores. Last 23 name, Flores. First name starts with a "J." It 24 looks like Jorge. No? All right. 25 Then I have Cassie Simpson.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">68</p> <p>1 never attend that school district. 2 And so to say that LCPS is offering 3 everything that every student and every family needs 4 is -- is just, quite frankly -- it's an absolute 5 lie. And the opportunity for these wonderful people 6 to see a need in our community and try to fill it is 7 not saying that they disagree with everything that 8 LCPS is doing; but they see a need for our families. 9 And so I really urge you to give more 10 opportunities to families to choose what they would 11 like to do with their students for education. 12 My family is native English speakers. So 13 I'm speaking on behalf of kids who have a -- just a 14 passion -- my son has a passion for learning 15 Spanish. And LCPS would not service him. 16 And so I -- I'm sorry to be emotional, 17 because it is. It's emotional. Thank you. 18 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next, we have 19 Susana Tapia Harper, and also Vanessa Alegria to 20 line up. 21 FROM THE FLOOR: Hello, everybody. So, 22 first of all, I'm not related to Ms. Julia. Just a 23 huge coincidence that we have "Tapia" in common. 24 Okay. So first, a little bit about 25 myself. My name is Susana Tapia Harper. I have a</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">67</p> <p>1 And the next two after her will be our 2 last two, Susana Tapia Harper and Ezra Tapia Harper. 3 If you all want to line up. 4 FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. Thank you guys so 5 much for offering this so that they can share our 6 thoughts and opinions on local education here. 7 My name is Cassie Simpson. S-i-m-p-s-o-n. 8 I have two young children right now, and 9 they're blessed to be in a charter school. They 10 have had a wonderful experience. 11 But not everybody has that opportunity, 12 because charter schools are smaller. And so on 13 behalf of my peers who have children on waitlists in 14 charter schools, I do urge you to consider and give 15 us the opportunity to have options, as parents. 16 I agree with everything that has been said 17 in support of this school. 18 I do want to express my very candid 19 disappointment in LCPS for what they have expressed 20 in terms of limiting the options for parents and for 21 families, because there -- if my children were not 22 in the current charter school they are, they would 23 not be going to LCPS. 24 I have a master's in education. I taught 25 at LCPS, and I knew at that point that my kids would</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">69</p> <p>1 degree in chemical engineering, a minor in 2 biochemistry. I have been working for NASA in a 3 management role there, in a technical testing role, 4 for over twenty years. 5 Just to say, that I have a strong passion 6 for science, for technology, for engineering, for 7 the fact that that has to be something that you 8 learn at a young age and put in your heart. 9 Our Las Cruces Public Schools offer a 10 magnet school in science in middle school, but 11 that's too late. You need to introduce that passion 12 for learning and that confidence that you are 13 qualified, that your creativity matters, at a 14 younger age. 15 In addition to that, I am a dual -- I 16 speak fluently both Spanish and English. (Spanish 17 spoken.) 18 When -- in my career, it has served me 19 extremely strongly to be able to speak two languages 20 fluently. I work with people from the European 21 space agency, Italy, Spain, The Netherlands. I work 22 with people from France. I work with people from 23 Japan. I work with people from Russia. 24 And the fact that I have a second language 25 to pull from helps tremendously in my ability to</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">70</p> <p>1 communicate, even when the words are not exact, 2 you're able to understand a lot more of what's going 3 on and has made me a leader in those communities. 4 So those two things were very important to 5 me when my children were going to go to school. I 6 wanted them to have that passion of learning, that 7 exposure to science and technology, engineering, 8 arts, and math, as well as a strong dual language. 9 I went to the Central Office. I sat with 10 the leads for our dual-language programs. I said, 11 "Which are the best schools for me to send my 12 children to?" 13 And I was honestly very disappointed to 14 say that most of our Spanish programs are 15 transitional programs. They are meant to help our 16 kids transition from Spanish to English. 17 And that when I sat -- I sat in classrooms 18 from kinder to fifth grade in numerous schools, I 19 was heartbroken to see by the time they're in second 20 grade, they're losing their Spanish. By the time 21 they get to fifth grade, they don't even understand 22 it. 23 I was looking for something better than 24 that. I wanted something that produced truly fluent 25 children coming out of elementary school ages in</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">72</p> <p>1 I think that's all I have to say. Thank 2 you. 3 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And our last 4 speaker. Vanessa. 5 MS. VANESSA ALEGRIA: Hi. My name is 6 Vanessa Alegria. A-l-e-g-r-i-a. I am a founder of 7 the Inspira STEAM Academy. I am also an educational 8 assistant, a team manager, a soccer coach, but, most 9 importantly, a mother of three. 10 This endeavor is fueled by being able to 11 provide students in our community access to a 12 bilingual, engaging, hands-on learning environment 13 that nurtures their potential and inspires them to 14 become lifelong learners and contributors to 15 society. 16 And that is why, as a parent, it is 17 important to me to be able to provide this kind of 18 opportunity for the students of Las Cruces. 19 Thank you very much. 20 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And thank you, 21 everybody, for joining us today. And for those of 22 you in the audience, you're still showing a lot of 23 support by being here. So thank you for that. 24 All right. That will move us to 25 comments -- PEC questions. So, Commissioners, happy</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">71</p> <p>1 both languages. 2 And I think also, this is not just a 3 program for -- 4 THE CHAIR: Sorry. Time is up. 5 FROM THE FLOOR: Oh. I'm sorry. 6 THE CHAIR: That's okay. Wrap it up. 7 All right. Ezra Tapia Harper. 8 FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. 9 THE CHAIR: Hello. 10 FROM THE FLOOR: I'm proud that I can 11 speak Spanish and English. And I feel like more -- 12 and I want other people to be able to do that. 13 I was also in public school kinder through 14 second. And they did have a Spanish program in 15 kinder, but after second grade. But after kinder, 16 first and second grade wasn't anything. And I'm -- 17 honestly would like it to continue. 18 I'm also -- I am dual-language. I speak 19 Spanish and English, both fluently, and I attend 20 J. Paul Taylor Academy. 21 And I think the Inspira project will be 22 beneficial to the community in many ways. 23 I also have very large ambitions. And I 24 really like science, and I feel like the Inspira 25 project is -- is -- is following that.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">73</p> <p>1 to take your questions. 2 If you could be very direct in who you 3 would like to ask the question to, that would be 4 better for me. That would help. 5 Commissioner Gipson. 6 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: So thanks for being 7 here. And thanks, everyone, for -- because we all 8 know the hard work it got -- it took to get you to 9 today. So thank you for that. 10 I think sometimes these days focus on the 11 negative portions of applications and less on the 12 positive, because you're trying to flesh out those 13 questions. And so we always want people to take 14 away that this is, you know, good spirit, and thank 15 you for doing this. 16 I want to say, just generally, as a member 17 of this community, thank you to the parents and to 18 Dr. Amador for expressing disappointment in LCPS in 19 the comments that they made, because serving the 20 children in this community should not be a 21 competition. It's supposed to be a collaboration. 22 LCPS has become less of a district of 23 choice, because, yes, they had to redistrict. And 24 through their redistricting process, they severely 25 restricted the choice option for parents in the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">74</p> <p>1 community. So to portray themselves as a district 2 of choice is disingenuous.</p> <p>3 In addition, to continue the narrative of 4 what charter schools are, schools that have less 5 accountability, schools that can't provide 6 everything -- and I acknowledge. It's -- it's 7 almost criminal that transportation and food 8 services is such a struggle with charter schools. 9 That's a whole different conversation.</p> <p>10 But the fact is that charter schools here 11 in New Mexico have a higher level of accountability. 12 And anyone who's been in a charter school knows 13 that. And it's people that know nothing about 14 charter schools, but simply look at narratives about 15 what is bad about charter schools and don't 16 understand them, that's the narrative that's 17 portrayed, and that's disappointing.</p> <p>18 I've had multiple conversations through 19 the years with prior superintendents, have had no 20 communication with the current administration.</p> <p>21 That's really disappointing. That shows, 22 to me, the lack of interest in that collaboration. 23 And that's what, hopefully, can change. That's what 24 I'm going to hope.</p> <p>25 So I'm going to get off that soapbox now.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">76</p> <p>1 of subjects. That schedule is to keep in par with 2 standards and benchmarks, to keep up with the scope 3 and sequence. It doesn't necessarily mean that that 4 is the exact time and how it will be taught.</p> <p>5 So if we have -- Ms. Jessica developed a 6 lesson. (Spanish spoken.) When she does that 7 lesson, we go through the lessons, everything is 8 inter- -- intersecting.</p> <p>9 So if we're doing a lesson that has -- 10 well, actually, I'll let you speak to the lessons. 11 So she can give you more details on that.</p> <p>12 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: Thank you. And thank 13 you, Madam Chair and commissioners.</p> <p>14 So we do have everything integrated. We 15 do have -- for your guys' purpose and for anybody in 16 the public, for them to see that we are teaching all 17 this, we have to chunk it. We have to block it.</p> <p>18 But that's exactly how interdisciplinary 19 works. Everything, like Ms. Julia said, will be 20 intertwined.</p> <p>21 We'll be teaching, for example, "Mi 22 Comunidad" in kindergarten. The kids will be doing 23 some six- to eight-week lesson, which, within those 24 six to eight weeks, the students will be doing math. 25 They'll be doing Spanish Language Arts, English</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">75</p> <p>1 But I was really very disappointed -- someone needs 2 to go into the charter schools that we have in this 3 community alone and see what they do with far less 4 than the local public school has.</p> <p>5 And they do.</p> <p>6 So let me move on from there. And thank 7 you, once again.</p> <p>8 And I think my questions are -- and anyone 9 can answer them, because I think it's going to be 10 mostly from Ms. Tapia-Rivera and probably Chris, 11 because it's programs and budgeting that I think are 12 somewhat of a concern.</p> <p>13 But let me just ask you, because when I 14 looked at -- I think it was in one of the 15 appendixes, there was samples of days and what 16 students would be doing in classes.</p> <p>17 So am I -- I thought I saw arts integrated 18 into every -- every one of those.</p> <p>19 So can you just walk me through that? 20 Because I think some people apparently missed that.</p> <p>21 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: Absolutely. Thank you. 22 So we are an interdisciplinary program, which means 23 that all of our subjects will be taught at all times 24 throughout the day.</p> <p>25 So in the application, you have a schedule</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">77</p> <p>1 Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, 2 Sciences, Arts, and even integrating that 3 social-emotional piece. Because our state needs 4 that. We need to make sure the social-emotional 5 piece is tied in.</p> <p>6 With that said, yes, we will focus, for 7 example, on a schedule. We have the 45 minutes of 8 English Language Development for students for 9 smaller groups to be able to come in there, work on 10 those targeted interventions, as well as, like, the 11 arts.</p> <p>12 One of the activities here in kindergarten 13 is that we have to learn it's "yo" in "Mi 14 Comunidad." That's what the lesson is called. So 15 the students will actually go through the Spanish 16 Language Arts using the benchmark Adelante 17 curriculum. And with that being said, the work on 18 alphabet, the work on vocabulary, decoding, sentence 19 structures. But in that, in benchmark, there is, 20 intertwining social studies and science in that 21 curriculum as well. But we will expand that.</p> <p>22 For example, the students will go home. 23 They will talk to their parents about what we've 24 been learning. And we do want to have a lot of 25 volunteers in the classroom. That way, the parents</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">78</p> <p>1 know what is going on.</p> <p>2 The technology piece, they will work in</p> <p>3 taking interviews from their parents and saying,</p> <p>4 "Okay. So I am -- I'm me. This is me. But who's</p> <p>5 my community? My community is my mom. My community</p> <p>6 is my friend. My community is the local partners</p> <p>7 that we have, like Albertsons," any of those areas.</p> <p>8 Even the food districts, like the restaurants, the</p> <p>9 post office. Those are all our community members.</p> <p>10 So with that said, that includes our</p> <p>11 social studies. That includes science with the</p> <p>12 science and engineering. The students are going to</p> <p>13 create models of their homes. "This is where I</p> <p>14 live. This is me. This is where I live."</p> <p>15 Within that, we will bring in the math.</p> <p>16 And with the math, that the students are going to</p> <p>17 create with toothpicks and marshmallows and show us</p> <p>18 a demonstration of the engineering piece. And that</p> <p>19 could also constitute as art.</p> <p>20 So that's all STEAM-integrated with</p> <p>21 language arts, with math, with our whole scope.</p> <p>22 I hope that answers -- oh, yes.</p> <p>23 Absolutely.</p> <p>24 So here we have the -- so I mentioned the</p> <p>25 drawing. The kids will -- they'll first have a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">80</p> <p>1 that the State requires of us and more.</p> <p>2 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Thank you. And I</p> <p>3 really do appreciate the -- you know, PBL is great.</p> <p>4 But unless you are deeply committed to the defending</p> <p>5 and the presentations of learning, it's a big loss.</p> <p>6 So the fact that you're building that into</p> <p>7 your structure, I really do appreciate and admire</p> <p>8 doing that, starting at such an early age. So I do</p> <p>9 appreciate that.</p> <p>10 So let's talk a little bit about -- walk</p> <p>11 me through -- you've talked about partnerships at</p> <p>12 NMSU and NASA and so on.</p> <p>13 So what are those partnerships looking --</p> <p>14 are they MOUs that you're going to have with these?</p> <p>15 Because I think you mentioned in -- in</p> <p>16 your introduction, you talked about your Wednesdays</p> <p>17 and the mornings where the kiddos will be off doing</p> <p>18 something while staff is doing.</p> <p>19 So who's with the kiddos? And I'm</p> <p>20 assuming that that's part of the partnerships. But</p> <p>21 what exactly -- how formalized is that going to be?</p> <p>22 And when you're looking at professional development,</p> <p>23 where is the budget for a lot of that professional</p> <p>24 development? So I think it's kind of both of you.</p> <p>25 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: So for those morning</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">79</p> <p>1 first draft, which they will draw their home. And</p> <p>2 then working on those lines, of course, that goes</p> <p>3 into math. I mean, it all interconnects.</p> <p>4 And then from there, they will be able to</p> <p>5 describe, present to their parents, to us, to</p> <p>6 administer to the governing board, to you guys,</p> <p>7 because you guys are more than welcome to come to</p> <p>8 our presentations, showing them that they do</p> <p>9 understand that a simple square, it does constitute</p> <p>10 as art.</p> <p>11 A 3-D model is part of art.</p> <p>12 Marshmallows and toothpicks are also part</p> <p>13 of art, because they're a demonstration of this.</p> <p>14 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: So art has standards</p> <p>15 and benchmarks that we will utilize through our</p> <p>16 units.</p> <p>17 We have our anchor standards that we use.</p> <p>18 That's part of the ten days of professional</p> <p>19 development that we do at the beginning of the year.</p> <p>20 That will touch on building those units and pulling</p> <p>21 out all those anchor and standards and benchmarks to</p> <p>22 make sure that we cover everything.</p> <p>23 Because it's not just a free-for-all.</p> <p>24 It's very specific, and it has to be done</p> <p>25 thoroughly, so we ensure that we cover everything</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">81</p> <p>1 sessions, we will be contracting ancillary staff to</p> <p>2 take care of the morning sessions. That'll be an</p> <p>3 extension of our STEAM units that we have during the</p> <p>4 week.</p> <p>5 So they will be working on something that</p> <p>6 is relevant. It's not some random lesson that they</p> <p>7 have brought up. It's not just to fill up the time.</p> <p>8 It is -- it has to do with the lesson that is being</p> <p>9 taught that week.</p> <p>10 And it's only once a month that we have</p> <p>11 those morning meetings. And Mr. Chris can answer</p> <p>12 the financial piece for that.</p> <p>13 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: I didn't see -- maybe</p> <p>14 I missed it. I'm not that numbers person. I think</p> <p>15 you know that. I didn't see that ancillary staff, I</p> <p>16 don't think, in the budget. So I guess that's that</p> <p>17 hanging question there.</p> <p>18 MR. CHRIS MASTERS: Commissioner Gipson,</p> <p>19 before I answer that, can you not be around these</p> <p>20 people and just not feel inspired? Seriously. Oh,</p> <p>21 my gosh. They are so passionate about this. This</p> <p>22 is what we know breeds success.</p> <p>23 But, yes, to answer your question, we</p> <p>24 actually have it in a couple of places. First, to</p> <p>25 address the professional development, the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">82</p> <p>1 professional development is built into the</p> <p>2 additional compensation, whenever you look at the</p> <p>3 staff's salaries; okay? So, for example -- and</p> <p>4 we've actually had several discussions about this --</p> <p>5 the -- as you saw, there was 136 hours of</p> <p>6 professional development available. And there is</p> <p>7 also a few other community events.</p> <p>8 So a staff's contract is based on whatever</p> <p>9 their TCI is going to be -- excuse me -- teacher</p> <p>10 composite index level -- education level and years</p> <p>11 of experience.</p> <p>12 Beyond that, with all of the other things,</p> <p>13 will be built-in stipends for all that. So they</p> <p>14 have motivation to attend. They have motivation to</p> <p>15 participate. But their actual base contract is</p> <p>16 based off of what their TCI --</p> <p>17 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: I think my question</p> <p>18 was more are you having to pay outside contractors</p> <p>19 for the professional development? And do we see</p> <p>20 that in the budget? Or are there just MOUs with</p> <p>21 these entities and they're simply saying, "We're</p> <p>22 going to come in and do this for you," but there's</p> <p>23 no additional -- there's no cost to you? And is</p> <p>24 that codified somehow through an MOU or something</p> <p>25 like that, so you know you can -- you're absolutely</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">84</p> <p>1 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: I don't -- I'm partly</p> <p>2 getting it. But I -- the Lego people -- because I</p> <p>3 met some of the Lego people at the charter fair.</p> <p>4 But I don't know. Are they free?</p> <p>5 Or -- so they're free?</p> <p>6 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: So the community</p> <p>7 partners will be volunteering with us, yes. We'll</p> <p>8 have somebody contracting to coordinate. That's</p> <p>9 part of our staff. But, yeah, we have individuals</p> <p>10 that do the rocket launching and -- some very safe</p> <p>11 explosions.</p> <p>12 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: All the explosions</p> <p>13 going on.</p> <p>14 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: Yeah. But,</p> <p>15 Madam Chair and Commissioners, I do want to state</p> <p>16 the MOU you were talking about through the</p> <p>17 MC Squared, we do have one of the instructors there</p> <p>18 that we will have to create an MOU to get her paid</p> <p>19 so they can come in and do the training for us.</p> <p>20 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Okay. So that -- that</p> <p>21 leads me to that question is I didn't see that in</p> <p>22 the budget. And maybe -- like I said, I could have</p> <p>23 missed it. But I didn't see budgeted for outside</p> <p>24 entities coming in to provide professional</p> <p>25 development.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">83</p> <p>1 going to be able to provide this?</p> <p>2 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: Madam Chair and</p> <p>3 Commissioners, it's actually a combination of both.</p> <p>4 I've talked to individuals within the organizations</p> <p>5 already to set up things like Lego racecar.</p> <p>6 So they have a huge setup that they can</p> <p>7 do. They have a huge setup, probably the length of</p> <p>8 this room, where kids can build their own cars.</p> <p>9 They have to build according to specification. They</p> <p>10 race them and time them. And the kids have a great</p> <p>11 time with that.</p> <p>12 So we've been in contact with people who</p> <p>13 can set up activities like that, activities like</p> <p>14 that for the students while we're in professional</p> <p>15 development.</p> <p>16 We will be contracting some ancillary</p> <p>17 providers as well.</p> <p>18 We have an individual who we have in mind</p> <p>19 to be the coordinator for the STEAM enrichment days</p> <p>20 once a month. So that person will be able to</p> <p>21 coordinate those and then reach out to the people</p> <p>22 and make sure everything is being set up according</p> <p>23 to whatever project is being done at that time.</p> <p>24 Chris, I believe it's in the budget under</p> <p>25 Contract Ancillary. So --</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">85</p> <p>1 I get how you compensate staff for the</p> <p>2 timing of it. But it's -- but it's paying the</p> <p>3 vendors, for lack of a better term, for the</p> <p>4 professional development. So where is that in the</p> <p>5 budget?</p> <p>6 MR. CHRIS MASTERS: So we have two places.</p> <p>7 The only thing that you'll find in the professional</p> <p>8 development is under the 2300 function. And that's</p> <p>9 actually in the professional development line.</p> <p>10 That's actually more of a -- the reason</p> <p>11 it's there is because that's how the school finance</p> <p>12 has kind of limited what you can put in other</p> <p>13 functions. And they've kind of wanted everything in</p> <p>14 the 2300 function, even though that's more an</p> <p>15 executive function. That's where professional</p> <p>16 develop, per se, comes out. (Verbatim.)</p> <p>17 You'll also find it in our contracted</p> <p>18 services, which you'll see in the 1000 -- excuse</p> <p>19 me -- and the 2400 function in this.</p> <p>20 The one where I don't believe that we put</p> <p>21 it because -- and I apologize on this. The guidance</p> <p>22 was a little bit mixed on utilization of other</p> <p>23 funds. But if we're looking at Fund 25154</p> <p>24 (verbatim), Teacher and Principal Recruitment and</p> <p>25 Training, a bulk of it would be coming from there.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">86</p> <p>1 And whenever we're looking at certain</p> <p>2 things like the -- these examples, whenever there is</p> <p>3 a stipend or a payment or a contract service being</p> <p>4 paid out to a presenter for these times, typically,</p> <p>5 we're looking at \$500, maybe up to \$1,000. That's</p> <p>6 kind of standard in the industry.</p> <p>7 So we're -- we're just kind of piecing</p> <p>8 those together.</p> <p>9 And we also have, as you can see, several</p> <p>10 volunteers that will be doing these things free. So</p> <p>11 those are the three locations where they're</p> <p>12 mentioned in the budget; so --</p> <p>13 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Okay, thanks.</p> <p>14 So while we're kind of on that, in the</p> <p>15 application and the build-out that you identified,</p> <p>16 you said you were going to have two K's and two 1's,</p> <p>17 for a total of 80. But it looked like in the budget</p> <p>18 you only had one class of K and one class of 1 in</p> <p>19 the budget.</p> <p>20 So that's -- your plan is to have the 80,</p> <p>21 hopefully, start with 80.</p> <p>22 Okay. So I have one more thing, and then</p> <p>23 I'll let other people move on.</p> <p>24 I know you've identified the building on</p> <p>25 Summit Court as your ideal -- I mean, we all know</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">88</p> <p>1 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Was that the one on</p> <p>2 Mesilla?</p> <p>3 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: It was a private</p> <p>4 school, Christian school, off of Lohman. That would</p> <p>5 have fit us. And they have enough space for us to</p> <p>6 expand for at least a couple of years.</p> <p>7 So we've been researching, again, the</p> <p>8 21 Summit Court. That is a dream location. But we</p> <p>9 have to look at the reality of the budget and what</p> <p>10 we can afford.</p> <p>11 So Rachel Matthew is -- he called me this</p> <p>12 morning. He will be there actively looking. And as</p> <p>13 soon as we are -- we move on with this stuff, then I</p> <p>14 can call him back, and he can continue with that</p> <p>15 research for us.</p> <p>16 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Because I didn't</p> <p>17 see -- that's my -- I didn't see in the budget any</p> <p>18 consideration for lease reimbursement.</p> <p>19 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: So Mr. --</p> <p>20 MR. CHRIS MASTERS: You bet. So,</p> <p>21 actually, that would be through the 31000-203</p> <p>22 (inaudible). But it's a PSCOC lease reimbursement</p> <p>23 program, which has just recently opened their window</p> <p>24 for the FY26 year.</p> <p>25 And I'm not sure who will be speaking with</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">87</p> <p>1 space is a real challenge here.</p> <p>2 But that was a call center. So it</p> <p>3 requires a lot of work.</p> <p>4 Have you had conversations with -- so the</p> <p>5 landlord is willing to make whatever accommodations</p> <p>6 are needed so that you can occupy it with</p> <p>7 E-Occupancy?</p> <p>8 MS. TAPIA-RIVERA: So the building is --</p> <p>9 we did visit it. It is a dream building. It</p> <p>10 already has a couple of classrooms set up in it. It</p> <p>11 has emergency doors. It is -- it has cameras. It</p> <p>12 has a huge parking space. So that is the dream</p> <p>13 location.</p> <p>14 It is very expensive. We did speak to the</p> <p>15 person that owns it. But I am currently talking to</p> <p>16 Mr. Steve Nakamura with Rachel Matthew Development</p> <p>17 in Albuquerque. He's helping me.</p> <p>18 Unfortunately, there was two -- this was</p> <p>19 very recent -- two schools that just shut down here</p> <p>20 in Las Cruces. And I -- we did go see them. One of</p> <p>21 them was a phenomenal location. And that was a</p> <p>22 location that we could have afforded. But it's old.</p> <p>23 It was hot off the market. And it sold very, very</p> <p>24 quick, before I even had a chance to get a budget</p> <p>25 for it.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">89</p> <p>1 PSCOC with how it will work for the planning year,</p> <p>2 should Inspira be approved.</p> <p>3 But for the first operational year, then,</p> <p>4 yes, we'll be applying for the PSCOC money.</p> <p>5 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Right. But when we</p> <p>6 look at a budget, we're looking -- so we look at,</p> <p>7 for not the planning year. But for that year one --</p> <p>8 MR. CHRIS MASTERS: Right.</p> <p>9 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: -- are you basing it</p> <p>10 on, "We're actually going to get 80 kids, so we're</p> <p>11 going to go out and we're going to find this</p> <p>12 building that's going to get us..." -- I forget what</p> <p>13 they're paying -- \$440 -- oh -- \$857; see? Well,</p> <p>14 yeah, whatever it is.</p> <p>15 So I don't see in the budget where you can</p> <p>16 afford any building, because I don't know what</p> <p>17 you're basing your lease reimbursement -- your</p> <p>18 membership on.</p> <p>19 So it's, like, you know, I tried to do the</p> <p>20 math for the Summit Court. And it's like -- it --</p> <p>21 even at the low end, it's not working out. If you</p> <p>22 have to lease that entire building, which I'm</p> <p>23 assuming you do, you're not going to make it on</p> <p>24 80 kids.</p> <p>25 And that's why I think one of the concerns</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">90</p> <p>1 was -- with capacity interview with that. It's, 2 like, there's -- we don't know whether your budget 3 actually works or not, because there's -- there 4 hasn't been any consideration -- okay. "We're 5 looking at this building. We're hoping to get, you 6 know, conservatively, 70 kids," so that you're not 7 going out and leasing something, you know, that you 8 absolutely can't afford. 9 "This is -- this is what we can afford, 10 and it fits in our budget." 11 So that's where I think there's a -- you 12 know, a concern was raised over that. It's, like, 13 what are you actually looking at when you're going 14 out and looking at buildings? 15 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: So as a new charter 16 school -- and this makes it tricky; right? What we 17 can -- right? -- and what we're doing and -- there's 18 two -- it's a live document. It's a moving piece. 19 So as a new charter school, upon approval, 20 we will seek federal grants and private funds to 21 help us qualify for -- for rent. 22 And upon approval, we will also apply for 23 the PCSNM grant, which is a \$2 million grant. 24 Doesn't pay for rent, guys. 25 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: Honestly. I'm not</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">92</p> <p>1 school. 2 And we have looked at -- like, the private 3 school that Ms. Julia was talking about earlier, 4 that would have fit us. And it would have been in 5 our, like, budget range. But it sold like that. 6 So we're still going to continue to work. 7 I know that there is one that is on our application. 8 And it's down in Mesilla, at least for that 9 first/second year, which would also be in our 10 budget, more or less, with that \$815 per membership. 11 And then doing the math on that one -- 12 but, then, once again, it's hard when -- when we go 13 to our Realtor, and they don't let us see buildings 14 because we don't have the money to give them right 15 away, too. 16 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: And you're not going 17 to have any money until you actually start. So 18 that -- 19 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: Absolutely. 20 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: I fully acknowledge -- 21 that's a difficulty with this system. And that's 22 unfortunate. I think it's also unfortunate when you 23 have to look in Mesilla. Because it really is 24 outside of -- way outside your target area. You get 25 folks from there, and then you move to the 70 side,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">91</p> <p>1 aware of any federal grant that pays for rent. 2 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: The planning year, it 3 does. 4 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: The planning year, it 5 does. But the planning year isn't getting you to 6 adequacy. The planning year allows you space for 7 offices. But not to build adequacy, unless you're 8 going to own that building, you know. 9 So that's where -- when you -- that was 10 part of that, my question there. When you said 11 federal grants, I'm not a -- we haven't had a single 12 applicant get any federal grants that helped with 13 rent. 14 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Okay. 15 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: So that's -- I was 16 curious. Maybe you found one, and we didn't know 17 about it. So that would be really great. 18 But the -- the charter school program 19 grant doesn't help with rent. 20 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: I do know that -- like 21 Ms. Julia was saying, like, that is our dream, the 22 Summit one. But we are continuously looking for 23 buildings to -- like, even the seeder buildings -- 24 just because I know -- I've been in charter schools 25 the last eight years. And you do start at a seeder</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">93</p> <p>1 you could lose all those kiddos, because the parents 2 can't get -- because you're not doing 3 transportation. 4 I know you know that. And I know that's 5 the challenge. 6 But thanks for the responses. I 7 appreciate it. 8 THE CHAIR: Any other Commissioner 9 questions? 10 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Just really quickly 11 for Chair Gipson. 12 I'm not familiar with Las Cruces; okay? 13 So where is Mesilla relative to the East Mesa? 14 Okay. 15 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: So when you're -- did 16 you come from Albuquerque? You were on I-25, Exit 8 17 or 7. That is the turnoff for 70, which goes east. 18 So that's where our preferred location is. 19 But Mesilla is over on the west side of 20 Cruces. 21 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Okay. Thank you very 22 much. 23 THE CHAIR: I am wondering if you can 24 describe -- a student who comes in who is already 25 Spanish-speaking, I imagine this school is a</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">94</p> <p>1 lifeline. For students who are not Spanish-speaking 2 or maybe have no Spanish experience, but want to 3 come to your school, what does their day look like 4 in the model that you've built? 5 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: I love this question. 6 So that would be the ideal for a -- for an 7 80/20 program, would be the ideal to have kids that 8 speak 50 -- if I have a classroom of twenty and had 9 ten speaking Spanish and ten speaking English, they 10 would both benefit from that language interaction. 11 The Spanish-speaker, if he's a native 12 Spanish-speaker, will have -- will continue to learn 13 in his native language. 14 The English-speaker will learn in Spanish. 15 And his peers -- he will learn the technical 16 language of STEAM, but he will also learn the 17 playground language, because that's very different; 18 right? 19 So we go from an 80/20, 70/30, 40/60 to 20 50/50. By the time they're at a 50/50, the child 21 that only speaks Spanish or any other language -- it 22 doesn't have to be Spanish -- it could be 23 Mandarin -- it could be Hindi -- if they come in, 24 and now they know three languages -- right? -- by 25 the time that they reach a 50/50 balance, they will</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">96</p> <p>1 a lot of repeat, like, a lot of, like, eye contact. 2 So that way, they're immersed. But also, 3 like -- I mean, us, as educators, we know when a 4 student is struggling, because they're looking at 5 you like -- you know, or like me, that I used to cry 6 because I didn't know the language. 7 So, I mean, you -- you work with that 8 individual student, and you get them to where they 9 need to be using the modeling strategies, the visual 10 strategies, et cetera. 11 Oh, yes. If they don't speak the 12 language, I actually have this particular student 13 this year. At first, it was hard for both of us -- 14 right? -- because I don't speak Farsi. But, once 15 again, like, we used all of these models to help 16 support him. He's actually reading now in English. 17 He's saying a few words in Spanish. And he's 18 continuing his language in Farsi as well. 19 Because one of the biggest things that 20 Ms. Julia does tell parents is, "At home, speak your 21 language, because we don't want them to lose their 22 language. We want to provide them a different 23 language for them to be able to speak in the 24 United States, or wherever they go." 25 THE CHAIR: Thanks. And I know -- I have</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">95</p> <p>1 have had the knowledge in Spanish and in English. 2 We only speak language once. We learn our 3 home language, and all we're doing is translating. 4 So if I know this is a pen, I know what it does. I 5 know it's a pluma; right? So we have to have strong 6 language skills in our first language in order to 7 learn a second language. 8 So the day will look the same for both. 9 If you are learning English, you will have 10 that 45 minutes pullout Monday through Friday, 11 including Wednesdays when we have those short days. 12 If you have special needs, you will be pulled out as 13 needed per your hours on your IEP. And, also, if 14 you're gifted, you will have a more challenging 15 curriculum, which, I mean, it'll be pretty 16 challenging to learn in a second language, whether 17 you're a Spanish-speaker or an English-speaker. 18 And we're adding in the STEAM component on 19 a daily basis, not just as a class, not just for 20 35 minutes, but completely throughout the day. 21 MS. CASTRO-BUELNA: Commissioner Burt, can 22 I just add something to that? So a lot of that has 23 to do with, like, for example, you said the 24 English-speaker is going to come in and learn 25 Spanish. It's a lot of visuals, a lot of modeling,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">97</p> <p>1 a bilingual school in my district that they -- it 2 definitely shows that trajectory of academic 3 achievement, you know. Like, I know it scares 4 families at first. And especially when students 5 come in, and maybe they're in first, second grade, 6 and they've been doing really well in their 7 English-speaking class, and they come to a school to 8 challenge, especially students who come in to get a 9 challenge and want to have high expectations of 10 themselves. And then they come into a bilingual 11 school, and it's not easy for them right away, which 12 is what they're used to. 13 So I do know -- from your background and 14 expertise, I have a lot of confidence that you'll 15 have the families and the communication that you 16 need in order to help, you know, expectations set, 17 what that looks like. 18 But I'm wondering if you want to -- if you 19 could talk a little bit about the family engagement 20 piece and how you'll bring families into the school 21 and helping educate them, those families who are 22 speaking all kinds of languages. So what that could 23 look like in your school, and how you'll do it a 24 little bit differently based off of your knowledge. 25 DR. TAPIA-RIVERA: Madam President, one of</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">98</p> <p>1 the -- I'm, like, that little -- thank you for 2 bringing up the fact that it does scare families. 3 That's one of the conversations I've had with the 4 team. And when we do recruit, and we start speaking 5 to families and doing open houses, that is a very, 6 very salient point that we have to make. It is 7 you're not going to see results immediately. And 8 that's something that if you're not in bilingual 9 education, you don't understand. 10 You don't see that growth immediately, and 11 it does take time. 12 So that's -- thank you for bringing that 13 up. But it is -- once the children understand 14 it's -- there's a significant learning curve, that 15 happens. 16 So with the parental involvement, we 17 are -- as anyone that has worked with me, my office 18 is always open. That's how I want the school to be. 19 The school is always open. 20 We will invite parents to come to share 21 their cultures, their language, their tradition. 22 We -- if you only speak Spanish, we would love to 23 teach you English. We would love to have those 24 classes at school. 25 If you only speak English, we want to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">100</p> <p>1 what I do; that's what we have to do. We meet the 2 needs of the individual students, and that extends 3 out to their families as well. 4 So I pride myself in what Ms. Julia said 5 about her door being open all the time is absolutely 6 true. We had multiple parents up here today that 7 have worked with us. And I think that they would 8 agree that we really believe that having that 9 parental involvement is critical. It's the core of 10 what we do. 11 I personally will be providing any kind of 12 trainings and group support to parents that they 13 want. As a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, I can 14 help with behaviors. The social-emotional piece 15 that Ms. Jessica talked about is huge for us. 16 Any kind of academic support that the 17 parents need -- tutoring -- we're definitely wanting 18 to help build that whole family. And communicating, 19 collaborating, and multidisciplinary support is the 20 core of who I am. 21 I started in special education in Early 22 Intervention. And that multidisciplinary model that 23 they use with the birth-to-three babies that have 24 developmental delays, it stuck with me to the core. 25 And so I think that that's -- that's been my</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">99</p> <p>1 ensure that you are able to communicate, that you 2 are able to understand the documentation that comes 3 home, that you are able to read the report cards, 4 that you are able to -- as educators, we know that 5 we have all these lovely IEP and SAT, L-M-N-O-P 6 words, and parents are not familiar with those. So 7 we want to make sure they understand the types of 8 services that they're receiving. 9 So that is -- we want to invite them. We 10 want to have community partnerships that teach 11 parents how to be better parents. 12 One of the books that we will use will be 13 Love and Logic, which really involves parental 14 involvement. And we want to make sure the parents 15 have nights where we invite the parents to come, and 16 we can show them the strategies that we're using so 17 we're speaking the same language, literally; right? 18 So that if they're trying to help their 19 children at home and they hear us say the same 20 words, they know, "You know what? My mom and dad 21 and my teachers are on the same page, and this is 22 exactly what it means and what they expect from me." 23 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: Thank you, 24 Madam Chair and Commissioners. As a special 25 educator, my whole world is individualizing. That's</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">101</p> <p>1 influence over the team is really engaging that 2 multidisciplinary core, but especially to include 3 the parents. 4 THE CHAIR: Thank you for that. The only 5 other question I have -- and it's going to be really 6 specific to the equity piece -- is because I 7 actually do think -- one of the things that I love 8 about this, I think the model itself is inherently 9 equitable. 10 To allow access to rigor in all the 11 subjects through multiple languages, (indicates) I 12 almost was, like, "Duh," because that is -- that is 13 then -- that's actually -- equity is access to 14 rigor; right? Like, to the supports in order to get 15 rigorous academia through a way that makes sense for 16 you in your language, your culture, however it 17 works. 18 So to me, the model -- I loved reading 19 through the application, because it was -- I mean, 20 it's just embedded all throughout it. 21 That being said, there's a couple of 22 pieces that I didn't feel as much, and it is that 23 transportation and food. And I know it does present 24 issues. But for me, that is an equity issue, 25 because families will not get access to your school</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">102</p> <p>1 because they do not have transportation. It's 2 eliminating access.</p> <p>3 And so to have a school with such, like, 4 deep, deep-seeded equity modeled throughout every -- 5 the day to day, my -- my scare is that the families 6 that deserve this level of equity, this level of 7 access, are going to be furthest from it, maybe, 8 like, literally physically; right?</p> <p>9 And if they can't make their way to school 10 at 7:00, 3:00 p.m. -- right? -- even if they want to 11 come to your school, they're not going to be able 12 to.</p> <p>13 And I know, once again, like -- I saw your 14 goal is to make sure you provide that food service. 15 And the backup plan is -- it seemed through your 16 application, like, "We want to provide food service, 17 and here is the backup plan."</p> <p>18 I don't want to go too far into it. But, 19 once again, to tell families, "You're going to have 20 to bring food," they're, like, "Well, if I send them 21 to this school, they're going to pick them up in my 22 neighborhood, and they're going to give them food."</p> <p>23 They may not have access to the 24 educational opportunities this school is providing, 25 especially in those elementary years, where we're</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">104</p> <p>1 Being in a charter, that is one of the 2 things that hurts my heart is that -- is that it 3 seems -- and I've shared with the team multiple 4 times -- that that is one of -- I would say the one 5 little thing that charter schools, we struggle with. 6 It seems almost elitist to have amazing programs 7 that children can't access.</p> <p>8 So this is one of the reasons why we're 9 starting small; right? We could have started with 10 240 kids enrolled out of program. But there are 11 multiple things that would be wrong and inequitable 12 with that.</p> <p>13 First of all, the children wouldn't have 14 the skills to be completely bilingual if I opened up 15 K through the 5. I would have the money for it, but 16 we wouldn't have children that are truly bilingual. 17 We have to start with the kids, K through the 1, 18 where we can train them, where we can show them, 19 where we can speak to them so they could practice.</p> <p>20 And the second reason was so we could 21 provide transportation as we grow.</p> <p>22 As you know, transportation is not -- LCPS 23 could provide the transportation. It doesn't say 24 they have to or that they want to. 25 And there are no funds for it for the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">103</p> <p>1 hearing -- bilingual education in traditional 2 districts generally is this separate area. And it 3 makes students feel different and separated and 4 excluded from the general population.</p> <p>5 So to come into a school where everybody 6 is doing it, I mean, you're just one of everybody. 7 It's not -- and not only that, it's celebrated. I 8 mean, for you to be bilingual, it's actually 9 celebrated. You're part of the cool club of the 10 school of, like, knowing multiple languages, that 11 gives students an inherent space of safety to start.</p> <p>12 And I just imagine a lot of families are 13 going to want that for their students. And 14 especially those students who show any kind of 15 interest in the STEAM area, I mean, like I said, I 16 think this is -- I love everything about the idea, 17 the application.</p> <p>18 I'm just wondering if you could talk a 19 little bit about -- I imagine you don't want to not 20 do those things. But I also wonder if there's a way 21 to prioritize it a little bit more.</p> <p>22 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Madam President, 23 thank you for that question.</p> <p>24 I have been in public education in 25 traditional and charters for the last twenty years.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">105</p> <p>1 first year. So that is one of the reasons why we 2 didn't place that on the application. It is our 3 hopes and aspirations to get a -- to write grants 4 and to ensure that, as we grow, that anybody that 5 wants to attend our school is able to attend our 6 school. That is my dream.</p> <p>7 We will not be limited, as you know, to 8 neighborhoods, to -- so if you want to come, and you 9 are lotteried in, then you are welcome to come to 10 our school, and that will occur as we grow and we 11 get the funds upon approval.</p> <p>12 The second thing was the food. I have 13 contacted Cravings. And the one thing I will say on 14 behalf of LCPS is they will participate, and they 15 will offer to feed the children. So we want to 16 ensure that all kids are fed.</p> <p>17 I had this conversation earlier about 18 the -- the way that the Senate Bill 4 is written, 19 the Universal Free Healthy School Meals, is written, 20 it's -- when you have those bills, they're not 21 forever; right?</p> <p>22 So that was one of the conversations that 23 we've had is that there is the possibility that this 24 might go away. And if it does, how do we supplement 25 that? So I had issues writing that in the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">106</p> <p>1 application, because I didn't want to say, "Yes, I'm 2 going to feed everybody," and then the question is, 3 "How are you going to feed everybody"; right? 4 But, currently, Senate Bill 4 is still 5 current, and we will ensure that kids receive 6 breakfast and lunch and snacks through other means. 7 I know that here and in -- I'm not sure if 8 it's also in Albuquerque -- but we have the Fresh 9 Food and Vegetables Grant that we can write. But 10 that is -- it has to do with the money that the 11 kids -- it all surrounds money. 12 So if we have enough low-income kids, then 13 we can apply for that grant. Other than that, we 14 will absolutely ensure that our kids are fed 15 breakfast, lunch, and snacks. 16 THE CHAIR: Thanks. I appreciate it. And 17 I did -- I just mentioned over here. We talked a 18 little bit about the CSP grant maybe through PCSNM. 19 That is something -- actually, I think we have a 20 school opening up that's helping them to provide 21 transportation. So that might be something to look 22 into as well. 23 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: (Inaudible.) 24 THE CHAIR: I do say -- I thank you for 25 that. That's always going to be my toughest thing</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">108</p> <p>1 Maybe it's a little more directed to something 2 they're interested in. 3 That's what choice provides, it provides 4 opportunities for every little -- every kid and did 5 every family. 6 So -- and that's where it isn't a 7 competition. It really shouldn't be. I mean, 8 every -- what a privilege for any family to have at 9 least two incredible schools that you have to decide 10 from. Oh, what a privilege, you know. 11 So I hope that's the problem we provide 12 for every family in New Mexico, that every family 13 has at least two schools, incredible quality 14 schools, that they can send their students to. 15 So I do think this is a unique school. 16 It's a unique -- and it just makes sense. I mean, 17 look around. Look at this community. Look at the 18 work that's happening. Look at the notoriety that's 19 happening. 20 I actually just went to a graduation for 21 another school. And they had Jacob Torres from NASA 22 come speak. And he's the first scientist to grow 23 fruit in space. And he grew green chiles in space 24 through NASA. I mean, it -- New Mexico is becoming 25 not just a -- I mean, it's always been an arts</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">107</p> <p>1 is, like, it's -- I want -- you know what? And I 2 will say. I'll be very quick with my little soapbox 3 about the -- because it is -- I mean, the 4 traditional schools are providing -- and I hope, for 5 every family in every neighborhood, that every 6 neighborhood school is improving, you know, that 7 their early intervention -- and they offer the most 8 incredible academic and educational experience to 9 every student in every neighborhood. 10 Also, even if -- it's the most incredible 11 school. It's absolutely perfect. It still might 12 not be a fit for certain students, even inside of a 13 family; right? I have two kids, and they -- they're 14 districted for the same school. They go to two 15 different schools, because my own kids are different 16 in my own household, much less in a community. 17 So I hope that every traditional school 18 improves, does all the things to provide an 19 incredible access to quality education for every 20 family in every community. 21 Also, there are going to be little kids 22 who want to go to a different kind of school, that 23 they just need -- they need a different kind of 24 education. They need something a little bit 25 different, a little bit -- maybe it is smaller.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">109</p> <p>1 community, always, and I believe it always will be. 2 It's also a science and tech booming 3 community. And to embrace that and empower that is 4 going to provide opportunities for these students. 5 It's just so cool. 6 So, yeah, I do think this is a unique -- a 7 unique opportunity for schools, not just in this 8 area, I think it could be any area in the state. 9 And I hope that this shows that, you know, this is 10 a -- this is a model that can be, once again, 11 showing that, you know, we can do both things. 12 You can have bilingual education and 13 rigorous STEAM academia as well, and providing all 14 those supports underneath to get students to that 15 academic level. 16 So those were my questions that I had. 17 Before we wrap it up, I'll just look again real 18 quick. 19 Commissioner Ingham. 20 SECRETARY CARRILLO: And could we take a 21 brief restroom break? I have questions; I'm sure 22 others do. If you're not going to take a break, I'm 23 going to go. 24 COMMISSIONER INGHAM: Just a brief 25 comment. I really sympathize with budgetary</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">110</p> <p>1 constraints. It is something that's been very</p> <p>2 troubling to me throughout my time here, and</p> <p>3 especially when we see new schools trying to start.</p> <p>4 And it makes -- I almost feel like we make</p> <p>5 it impossible. And I know it's not we, as</p> <p>6 Commissioners; but our expectations and what we're</p> <p>7 left with is really, really difficult.</p> <p>8 And so all I want to tell you is my</p> <p>9 commitment is to do what I can to help charter</p> <p>10 schools with their funding. I am on the PSCOC.</p> <p>11 I -- as Pattie was talking about, it is \$815 per MEM</p> <p>12 lease reimbursement. I think that that can -- we're</p> <p>13 going to really work hard at getting that better.</p> <p>14 I wish I could offer you some other</p> <p>15 options or anything. All I can say is my commitment</p> <p>16 is to do the best I can to help, especially starting</p> <p>17 schools, to get in a place where they can actually</p> <p>18 get -- get -- spend their money on their academics</p> <p>19 and do what their mission is and not be struggling</p> <p>20 with just budgetary constraints.</p> <p>21 I want to thank you for your application.</p> <p>22 I'm very impressed. I just wish I could offer you</p> <p>23 more with that. But thank you guys for being here</p> <p>24 and for this application.</p> <p>25 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">112</p> <p>1 COMMISSIONER INGHAM: I'd be glad to</p> <p>2 research that.</p> <p>3 DR. VANESA DE LEON: Okay. Thank you.</p> <p>4 THE CHAIR: All right. Yeah. Any other</p> <p>5 questions? Or else we're in recess.</p> <p>6 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Yeah. Can you repeat</p> <p>7 everything that you said, sir, while I was gone,</p> <p>8 please?</p> <p>9 Okay. So a couple of things. One of the</p> <p>10 things that struck me is that, first off, you're a</p> <p>11 very impressive group of people, and this is a very</p> <p>12 impressive plan. So thank you very much for your</p> <p>13 year -- your years, decades-long dedication to kids,</p> <p>14 because that's ultimately why we're all here. It's</p> <p>15 all about public -- kids in general, but public</p> <p>16 school kids; right?</p> <p>17 So I'm just -- I'm curious. And there are</p> <p>18 other questions I have in terms of the school itself</p> <p>19 and different things.</p> <p>20 But who, among you -- and I imagine it's</p> <p>21 you, Ms. Tapia -- just how did this come to you that</p> <p>22 you wanted to do -- there's an ah-ha moment.</p> <p>23 There's a spark. There's something that happens</p> <p>24 when a founder says, "You know what? I want to open</p> <p>25 a charter, and this is what I want to be."</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">111</p> <p>1 MS. VANESSA DeLEON: Commissioner Ingham,</p> <p>2 can we ask a clarifying question on what you just</p> <p>3 mentioned right now in reference to the funding? In</p> <p>4 that charter school facility funding, there is --</p> <p>5 I'm just kind of asking for this is a project that</p> <p>6 talks about acquisition funding for a new building.</p> <p>7 Is that something that Inspira could</p> <p>8 possibly qualify for, within your expertise and</p> <p>9 guidance there?</p> <p>10 COMMISSIONER INGHAM: I'm not real sure</p> <p>11 about the specific program. I know that PSCOC does</p> <p>12 fund a lot of construction projects. And that's</p> <p>13 another area where we're working to get equal access</p> <p>14 for charter schools.</p> <p>15 So far, it's kind of difficult. But it is</p> <p>16 my commitment to -- to challenge that committee with</p> <p>17 that expectation that we have equal access for</p> <p>18 charter schools.</p> <p>19 Specifically on an acquisition, I am not</p> <p>20 familiar with that. If you can show me something, I</p> <p>21 would be happy to look at it. Is it a section in</p> <p>22 the Charter School Act?</p> <p>23 DR. VANESA DE LEON: Yeah, absolutely.</p> <p>24 It's in the Notice of Intent, and there's specific</p> <p>25 language in the statute, too, here, that we --</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">113</p> <p>1 And they start jotting down some notes and</p> <p>2 an outline. And then they start going to one other</p> <p>3 person. "Does this sound okay to you?"</p> <p>4 Tell me your story, please.</p> <p>5 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: So, in my house,</p> <p>6 during COVID, I had a office, which was my office in</p> <p>7 the closet. And -- many of you probably had the</p> <p>8 same as well.</p> <p>9 That is where Ms. Castro and myself, we've</p> <p>10 been teaching for a while. We've been in a couple</p> <p>11 of charter schools. And that is where our story</p> <p>12 began was --</p> <p>13 MS. JESSICA CASTRO-BUELNA: In the</p> <p>14 "cloffice."</p> <p>15 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: In the cloffice,</p> <p>16 where we were thinking about our schools and what we</p> <p>17 were offering, and we would love to share our right</p> <p>18 ideas.</p> <p>19 And one of Ms. Castro's passions has</p> <p>20 always been STEAM. She's a lot younger. So she's</p> <p>21 very techy. And she's very -- she has all these</p> <p>22 ideas that she shared with me. And that was one of</p> <p>23 the -- something that sparked back during COVID. So</p> <p>24 we began jotting notes during our COVID years. And</p> <p>25 from there --</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">114</p> <p>1 MS. JESSICA CASTRO-BUELNA: So with that 2 said, yes, we started doing our notes and all that 3 good stuff. But Ms. Julia, she -- bilingualism is 4 her jam, as it is mine. But Julia, she can talk 5 your ear off, give you history lessons about 6 bilingualism, and research, lots of research. 7 With that said, I do love STEAM. Math was 8 not always my biggest strength, but it has gotten 9 there because of MC Squared which is one of these 10 programs that we want to bring on. 11 But then we moved here. Because we were 12 like, "Oh, a new opportunity is coming for us." 13 So we moved down from Albuquerque. We had 14 our first year here at another charter school. 15 And I told Julia, "I think it's time. I 16 think it's time we just start this." 17 And at that moment, it was not time. We 18 both looked at it, and we were like, "No, it's not." 19 So then we moved to a different school. 20 And this is where we met the rest of the team. 21 Ms. Gonzales, she's passionate about that 22 special education and about making sure every 23 student, regardless if they do have an IEP or not, 24 like, they are being taken care of. Like, our 25 passion is the kids at the end of the day.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">116</p> <p>1 difference, the folks that show up with their 2 babies, the folks that show up with their husbands. 3 And it is safe to say that. 4 And the passion for math, science, 5 engineering, Ms. Trish is an engineer. She has a 6 background in mechanics. She knows all about cars. 7 And that's impressive to have a woman know that; 8 right? 9 And so this is what we want to offer. And 10 this is the chance, and this is our passion. 11 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Thank you. So on the 12 lottery side -- because this kind of goes to that -- 13 no one has any control over a lottery and who's 14 going to apply, who applies first, and who ends up 15 later on the list. 16 What would you do if 80 percent of your 17 applicants in your very first grades were all 18 basically English language speakers who had no 19 Spanish, and their parents heard about this school 20 and said, "Oh, my God, this is great. My kid can 21 learn Spanish." 22 And your model seems to be the inverse of 23 that. So how would you handle that? 24 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: So it isn't. 25 This program, if you -- it's not just for Spanish</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">115</p> <p>1 Ms. Trish, I kind of "voluntold" her at 2 first, and then she fell in love with the idea. I 3 had her student when I first started at the school 4 I'm at right now. 5 And I just shared our vision and -- well, 6 I asked Julia first. I asked, "Can I share?" And 7 she said yes. And some of our members out there, 8 also, we just shared the vision. And these last six 9 months, we've been stuck in her house, trying to get 10 this together. Props to Luis for letting us, you 11 know, steal her and all of their husbands and wives, 12 you know. Like, just -- that's where Inspira came. 13 SECRETARY CARRILLO: So is it safe to say 14 it's the bilingualism aspect of this, which really 15 kind of just drove you to say, "We're doing this no 16 matter what"? 17 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: The bilingual 18 piece. And I have to say the folks that are on the 19 founding team, we met them through the equity 20 council. 21 So when we started the equity -- I've led 22 the equity council at the school I was at before 23 that. And that's how I knew these folks were the 24 right folks to team up with us. These are the folks 25 that show up, the folks that want to make a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">117</p> <p>1 speakers. Our program aims to teach both languages. 2 So if you speak English, and we have 80 kids that 3 only speak English, that's fantastic, because now 4 you're able to communicate in the STEAM languages 5 and in Spanish. 6 So this is great. That would be a great 7 problem to have. 8 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Well, good. Since 9 you mentioned, in the STEAM -- so I'm just -- I 10 always have a problem with that jargon. I know that 11 STEAM and STEM, those are the terms we use now. I 12 was just making a joke with Missy that we could come 13 up with some other phrases right now, trademark 14 them, and that'll be the new jargon. 15 But my challenge with STEAM is people 16 often use -- they often -- they should be STEM or 17 they should just be whatever, a good school. 18 The arts piece is often missing. Now, 19 what I heard -- because I didn't read about an arts 20 program, per say. But what I heard -- and correct 21 me if I'm wrong -- you're really going to embed arts 22 as part of all the subjects; is that correct? 23 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: That is correct. 24 We will embed arts. It's not a separate class. We 25 will ensure we're covering the anchor standards</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">118</p> <p>1 throughout our units, daily. It's not something 2 that's going to be -- it's not a pullout. It's not 3 once a month; it's not a club; it's not a if we have 4 time. 5 It's daily throughout every lesson that we 6 have, and it's embedded in our six- to eight-weeks 7 units. 8 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Is music going to be 9 integrated at all? 10 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Music, dance, 11 arts. 12 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Fantastic. A lot of 13 times, people love the term STEAM, but they don't 14 incorporate all that stuff. And I find that very 15 frustrating. 16 The -- so -- so many notes. A lot of 17 this -- you know, I was going through at the last 18 minute today more of the peer review stuff. And, 19 just, there's -- again, jargon is used so much. 20 So, like, I'm curious as to when you say 21 the ability to personalize, you know, lesson plans, 22 because that's a lot of time. And I guess it speaks 23 to the special ed piece as well, where there seem to 24 be budget deficiencies in the peer review aspect of 25 it.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">120</p> <p>1 So that is my specialty. They will be 2 trained in behavior; they will be trained in 3 different disabilities, different overlaps in 4 disabilities. 5 We have a very strong belief in 6 identifying early, because of my background in early 7 intervention. So that SAT process is going to be 8 really strong. As soon as we see the student is 9 falling behind a little bit, we already have a plan. 10 We're already proactive people. 11 I have seen in the past, sometimes my 12 students are an afterthought to the lesson plan. So 13 the teachers will build this magnificent lesson 14 plan, and then, "Oh, it doesn't work for that 15 student, so what do we have to do again?" 16 And so that universal design that is 17 talked about in the application is really near and 18 door to us, because you have to plan for that. 19 We're going to make our lesson plans for all 20 students, not adapt them after the fact. 21 And when you really -- when you really 22 believe that that's the right way to do it, it comes 23 naturally. 24 And that's why I teamed up with this team 25 here. Ms. Julia and Ms. Jessica both have shown an</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">119</p> <p>1 As the school grows, how are you going to 2 meet those special education needs? And then what 3 does it mean where you're personalizing an ed plan, 4 even for non-special-ed kids? Because that's what 5 it seemed to say. 6 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: Thank you for 7 asking about my students. 8 The way that we're going to address and 9 personalize is by training the entire staff. And so 10 that it really is -- if you look at the numbers, 11 it's twice the PD that the traditional schools 12 provide. 13 And, yes, that's taking from our budget. 14 But we are very passionate that it is critical to 15 our school to be able to deliver the program that we 16 are promising. 17 All of the educational assistants, the 18 verbiage in the application can be interpreted 19 either way. Because it says "special education 20 teacher" and "educational assistant." So I can see 21 where it looks like two separate things. 22 It's really not. All of our educational 23 assistants will receive the special education 24 training. Our gen ed teachers will also receive the 25 special education training.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">121</p> <p>1 extraordinary -- extraordinary want and need to help 2 all the students. I don't feel like I have to fight 3 for my students' rights. I don't feel like I have 4 to fight for their education. 5 Working with them has shown me that, yes, 6 there are people who are aligned with my vision for 7 my students and who will make them feel included and 8 who will help them succeed. 9 And so the universal design and the PD 10 ahead of time, I want to tell you right now the 11 teachers are not going to be super happy when we 12 have to go back early. But it is critical, and we 13 will be asking people to join the team who share 14 that same belief and who will share in that culture 15 with us. 16 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Great. I'm impressed 17 with the amount of PD that you're having and the way 18 you're kind of budgeting it in with that half day 19 where it's PD on -- I don't know -- the first or 20 third Wednesday or whatever it was. I think that's 21 extremely important. And I know that most districts 22 don't have nearly the amount of professional 23 development that charters often build into their 24 plans. So thank you for that. 25 On the --</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">122</p> <p>1 MS. JESSICA CASTRO-BUELNA: Can I add 2 something to that, Commissioner? 3 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Yes. 4 MS. JESSICA CASTRO-BUELNA: One of the 5 things we forgot to mention earlier, we are going to 6 vertically and horizontally align everything within 7 that first two weeks of PD when we do see what 8 students we get when we open. That way, we can 9 easily make shifts. 10 Everything is created, but we can shift to 11 meet all of our students' needs, not just, "Oh, 12 kindergarten, that's the only one that's going to 13 have those needs." Everyone will be horizontally 14 and vertically aligned. 15 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Terrific. Thank you. 16 Thank you for that extra explanation. 17 On the -- so on the special ed side and 18 the budget side, what the reviewers had said -- and 19 I believe that Ms. Gipson stated it as well -- that 20 it's not in the budget, some of the special ed 21 departments, the ancillary staff. And I looked at 22 the different numbers that you had said, and I 23 didn't see it. 24 MR. CHRIS MASTERS: So we have -- the 25 ancillary staff will not be staffed. They're</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">124</p> <p>1 increases the SEG value of -- and let's say we just 2 had 10 percent special education, that A-B level, 3 that factor of .7 is going to increase our first 4 year probably about 40, 50 grand right there, easy. 5 That 40-, 50,000 right there would be obvious. We'd 6 have to use it to maintain our maintenance of effort 7 numbers. But that is what can be used as contracted 8 services in addition to what we already have 9 allocated in the budget. 10 And so I do apologize for my understanding 11 of the 905 -- excuse me -- the 901B5 tool and how it 12 was. Because that section right there was 13 completely different than all the other sections. 14 But I believe we did put it in the 15 maintenance of effort piece, definitely in the 16 narrative, that any funding that we get right there, 17 whether it's contract services or one special 18 education teacher, those are what we're basing our 19 MOE on. Does that answer your question? 20 SECRETARY CARRILLO: It does. Thank you 21 for that -- for the answer. 22 There's -- so there's three things here. 23 So, as you know -- and I'm sure those of you who 24 have been with charters before -- the board is the 25 foundation of everything.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">123</p> <p>1 ancillary FTEs. And most of those will be falling 2 under the other contracted services. 3 The school, especially with the -- 4 starting off with the kids, it's not going to be 5 able to hire someone like Tessa a while ago that 6 testified from (incomprehensible). We'll have to 7 contract these services out. Two people, like Tessa 8 from (incomprehensible) or speech language therapy. 9 The amount of time that she works there will be in 10 that FTE. Even though she's not an employee, it's 11 an equivalent. 12 So if she's there one -- let's see -- four 13 hours a week, what's that? 10 percent of the week 14 right there? So she would be a .1 FTE. 15 Now, the place where we did have 16 difficulty was in the 901B5 tool itself. Whenever 17 we tried to put in special education membership, it 18 would not allow any projections in there. And then 19 the piece for that was kind of grayed out for the 20 actual enrollment. 21 So we actually had discussion between -- 22 "Guys, you know, this is..." na-na-na-na. So I 23 don't want to apologize for the tool. But I want to 24 apologize for how we did the tool. 25 Now, if we put that in there, that</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">125</p> <p>1 When boards go downhill, schools go 2 downhill. And we've seen this all too often. 3 And so it seemed like when I read through 4 this, you already have different people that want to 5 serve in different board capacities; right? 6 And I don't remember, from looking at 7 this, who is planning on serving right now initially 8 as the board chair? 9 MS. PATRICIA WATKINS: That would be me, 10 Commissioner. 11 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Well, okay. So I 12 think one of the most challenging things for boards 13 that I have found is how do they hold other members 14 accountable, and how do they hold their head 15 administrator accountable? 16 I ask this. And I want, like, a concrete 17 answer of what your recall plan may be. Because we 18 might have several schools -- no, we do. We have 63 19 schools now, starting in a couple of weeks; right? 20 So of our schools, we have many who have 21 been lagging in their performance on so many levels 22 for so long. 23 And they've got the same head 24 administrator; they've got the same staff. And 25 boards don't hold the head administrator accountable</p>

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1 or other board members and build into their plan how
2 are we going to hold them accountable? How are we
3 going to report everything out at a board meeting?

4 So what is your plan perhaps to hold those
5 people -- you only hire one person -- to hold your
6 administrator -- I always use the "accountable"
7 word. No one wants to use the C-word, the
8 "consequences" word. Because if they are not able
9 to pull the school out of the cellular, very seldom
10 do I see a board that's willing to take
11 consequential action to say, "You know something?
12 We're non-renewing."

13 So if you can explain to me -- also, if
14 you have HR experience in that area, sometimes
15 you've got to just tell people it's not working
16 outside.

17 MS. PATRICIA WATKINS: Thank you,
18 Commissioner. I am very blunt. I am a parent first
19 and a parent of a special needs child.

20 So holding people accountable is what I
21 do. I've done this long before I stuck into my role
22 as a special ed educational assistant. So taking
23 this is going to be a whole new challenge for me.
24 But I'm up to it because I am very organized.

25 My plan is to work closely with Ms. Julia.

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1 I am very involved in what the school does. I met
2 her in our equity council and our PAC. And that's
3 where I started all of this, in advocacy, even
4 before. So she knows what I'm about. She knows I'm
5 very much of a follower. So as a board, I want us
6 to build it so we have those consequences; we have
7 everything we need to evaluate her every year.

8 SECRETARY CARRILLO: This isn't speaking
9 just to you. Who knows what can happen to any of us
10 at any given time? It's the position of the head
11 administrator.

12 MS. PATRICIA WATKINS: Whoever is in that
13 position, we evaluate every year. For us board
14 members specifically, we are going to do
15 self-evaluations as well.

16 So that's going to lead us to being able
17 to have that reflective piece and be, like, "Okay,
18 this year, I wasn't in the classroom as much as I
19 really want to be." Or "How did this go? I really
20 want to see the numbers on our project-based
21 learning."

22 So having that available to us, and
23 working with Ms. Julia, even just the teachers,
24 being able to go in, where we're going to be very
25 inclusive, having our board members be a part of

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1 that. So that is one of the other ways that we are
2 going to be very involved.

3 But as a board, we are going to meet once
4 a month and hold each other accountable. And if it
5 doesn't work, once our term is up -- like, my term
6 will be up in three years. And then I think it's
7 two and three years, we're going to keep our times
8 at, we're going to find somebody suitable that can
9 replace us. This way, it keeps going, and our board
10 keeps building, and we get those fresh eyes.

11 But we also don't want our board to be
12 full of educators. As Ms. Julia said, I am a former
13 mechanic. I worked for Cummins before this, and I
14 have that background. So I don't come exactly with
15 the education lens. My lens now is as an educator,
16 because I am seeking that special education
17 bachelor's right now.

18 But having our board members being from
19 finance, being from NASA, having those other inputs
20 are going to give us those fresh eyes and know what
21 to do. Be, like, "Hey, that doesn't sound very
22 right," and we can come to a decision based on that.

23 SECRETARY CARRILLO: I personally think
24 boards can be more effective when there's less
25 educators on the board. It's good to have one

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1 person on there that really has a sense of things.
2 But it's really, you know, somebody from the private
3 sector, somebody in finance. Speaking of finance,
4 what's your plan for a board of finance, because
5 that seemed to a deficiency in the reports.

6 MS. PATRICIA WATKINS: Our board of
7 finance will be Ms. Tania.

8 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: She's our
9 treasurer. Our proposed treasurer is a -- yes. So
10 that was one of the comments that we -- it was a
11 mistake. We missed that in the application. So we
12 will apply for that once we are approved. There are
13 dates that we follow to make sure that we apply for
14 that.

15 And like Ms. Trish said, I really do want,
16 and I plead, that there is a governing board that
17 will hold myself, or whoever the executive director
18 is, accountable, because that is one of the issues
19 that charters could have; right?

20 Like you mentioned, we have these
21 directors that have been in leadership for a certain
22 amount of years, and there's no accountability. And
23 that piece is very, very important to me, to me,
24 personally, and they know that.

25 So it is crucial that they hold myself or

<p style="text-align: right;">130</p> <p>1 whoever is in leadership accountable for the scores, 2 for how the school is doing, for the health of the 3 school with the teachers, and for what -- for the 4 community. What are we doing with the community? 5 SECRETARY CARRILLO: And the board really 6 needs to stay on top of the financials. Yes, the 7 head admin can be involved in that. But we've seen 8 all too often where the board will get information, 9 and they might report out on it at a board meeting, 10 but they don't do anything about it. 11 They can see where there's big huge red 12 flags. But they're not all necessarily finance 13 people, and they require the business manager to 14 step in on things like that. 15 MS. PATRICIA WATKINS: We're also going to 16 have Ms. Vanessa there as a third eye. So we're 17 going to be very inclusive, so that there is checks 18 and balances within our board. 19 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Do you -- when I read 20 it, you said you wanted your treasurer to be an 21 immigration attorney? 22 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: That was a 23 misunderstanding. Our treasurer is an immigration 24 attorney. 25 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Oh, is. I thought it</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">132</p> <p>1 code. Because that's nice. But what's the 2 follow-up on all of this? 3 There are people that say, "Yeah, this 4 sounds interesting to me." 5 And then there -- I'm not asking you to do 6 a survey. You can do whatever you want to do. But 7 it's, like -- and then there are people that say, 8 "Seriously considering sending my kid there." 9 Somebody says, "Oh, my God, what a godsend 10 this school is." 11 Then you can get a sense of what your 12 enrollment is going to be. 13 So what is a more extensive plan for 14 getting the data you need to really kind of know 15 what your enrollment may be in year one? 16 How does that look to you? How are you 17 going to work that out? 18 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: So in the peer 19 review, there was a misunderstanding, also with the 20 QR code. The QR code was used as one option to give 21 feedback. 22 So we -- we did speak to community members 23 out in soccer games. We spoke to community members 24 in pre-Ks. We spoke to community members at NMSU 25 when they had a STEM night. There was a big</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">131</p> <p>1 said you desired it. Because the way it read was, 2 like, "What?" 3 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: She's a 4 multi-million-dollar owner of businesses. And she 5 has a lot of the experiences with finances. She has 6 her own -- I'm positive that she will be good with 7 our finances as well. 8 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Thank you. So 9 there's no question that there's community support. 10 But we heard very many -- a number of people come 11 out today. And we always -- we love it when young 12 people are really articulate and express themselves 13 at meetings. And they were here as well. 14 But in looking at the appendix that had to 15 do with community outreach and everything, so -- 16 there were a whole bunch of -- in one of the 17 columns, it said, "Spoke with so-and-so about this". 18 Spoke with so-and-so about that." 19 To me, that doesn't mean anything unless 20 somebody says, "I am going to do this. I commit to 21 that." 22 And I didn't see a lot of that in the 23 community outreach appendix. 24 And that is the hardest part. 25 And what concerned me also was the QR</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">133</p> <p>1 celebration. 2 So we were there. Your question is kind 3 of hard to get a commitment from families for a 4 school that doesn't exist. This is -- we presented 5 our plan. We presented our ideas. And they're 6 very, very interested in our ideas. 7 And that is the way we gathered data. We 8 have surveys that are paper, and we have a lot of 9 information that we gathered through the QR codes, 10 because our younger generation is changing and they 11 want to see more of the online presence and more of 12 not so much paper and pencil. We were able to 13 provide all of the options so that we can receive 14 feedback. 15 Once we are approved, then we will have a 16 plan that is detailed in the application to go out 17 into the community to have those nights at the park, 18 to have the nights at the pool when it gets warmer, 19 and then to have all those invites to really have 20 families that want to be in our school sign up and 21 so that we can tell them the next step going 22 forward. 23 MS. JESSICA CASTRO-BUELNA: Something I do 24 want to add is the QR code was really beneficial, 25 because a lot of those people already gave us their</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">134</p> <p>1 information. So as soon as we get approved, e-mails 2 are going to start blasting off, and we will start 3 getting our projected numbers from that. 4 Like Ms. Julia said, we're going to start, 5 like, hammering all of the community events again. 6 We created all these partnerships with the people 7 you saw on -- on the slide show. And they're 8 allowing us to come and do some sponsorship with 9 them-ish. Like, their -- Deputy Dawgz is a little 10 truck here that's fairly new. It's a good hamburger 11 place, if you guys want to go. 12 So they allowed us to put QR codes out 13 there. 14 Amy is very kind, and she said, "Whenever 15 you guys get your approval, come on over. We'll 16 have an event." And we both benefit from it. We 17 benefit from getting students, and we also benefit 18 from giving our community, our locals, some money; 19 right? Financial stability, as well as students for 20 our school. 21 SECRETARY CARRILLO: That sounds great. I 22 always -- I always reserve the right to have a 23 Columbo moment. 24 But, you know, I wrote something down here 25 with a star and a big exclamation mark. And I</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">136</p> <p>1 of their math testing skills. 2 We did see a -- an increase -- a huge 3 increase for some of the students -- and 4 Ms. Gonzales can talk about her students as well -- 5 but with those other different types of teaching 6 math to students, not just the standard algorithm. 7 Not everybody understands the standard algorithm. 8 So having different opportunities for 9 them, which we will hopefully get with MC Squared, 10 we will start to show increases in those math 11 skills. 12 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: For those who are 13 not familiar, MC Squared stands for 14 "Mathematically/Connected Communities." 15 It's a very strong program within the math 16 program at NMSU. They are phenomenal. 17 Ms. Jessica didn't mention that her and I 18 have spent the last two years increasing specialized 19 training in math. And we took three different 20 courses to be able to teach our students better. 21 The MOST program she mentioned is an 22 out-of-school-time tutoring program. So we used the 23 skills that we gained in our training to provide 24 that type of teaching to the students after school. 25 And it's a research-based, grant-funded</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">135</p> <p>1 looked at the different schools and the districts as 2 a whole in Las Cruces. And it's no different than 3 the rest of the state that most of our kids can't do 4 math to save their lives; right? I mean, scores are 5 frequently in the low teens, low 20s, rarely in the 6 upper 30s and 40s. 7 And they always say, "Oh, we're doing so 8 much better than the district or the state." That 9 doesn't -- that's not a good benchmark to use; okay? 10 So you're a STEAM school; right? And the "M" in 11 STEAM is "math." 12 How are you going to do things differently 13 on the math side so that you stand out among schools 14 in the Las Cruces area? 15 MS. JESSICA CASTRO-BUELNA: So as I 16 mentioned just a while ago about MC Squared, 17 MC Squared is -- they're mathematicians here at 18 NMSU. And they are full in support of helping us, 19 allowing us that moment to be able for them to come 20 in as teachers, do professional development. 21 Ms. Gonzales and I actually did -- the 22 last two years we've done -- it's called "MOST." So 23 it's -- oh, I just lost the name. 24 Anyway, it's an after-school program where 25 we target those students who are at the lower phase</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">137</p> <p>1 program through NMSU. And so they paid us to spend 2 our time and show the state that it is a very 3 effective way of teaching math and that there are 4 results. 5 So, yes, my special education students did 6 participate as well. And, yes, every single one of 7 our students showed growth from -- from semester to 8 semester. So we take a beginning baseline point at 9 the beginning of each semester and at end of 10 semester, and we qualify kids as they go. 11 We had kids that graduated out within a 12 couple of semesters. And we did the program for two 13 years. And we're hoping that they continue funding 14 for that so we can continue this endeavor this next 15 year also. 16 SECRETARY CARRILLO: That's great. So 17 when we get our reports back two, three years from 18 now, it would be nice to see your scores, because 19 you realize this has to be a focus, initially. It 20 can't be something we catch up on. We want to excel 21 right away. 22 MS. JULIA RIVERA-TAPIA: Commissioner 23 Carrillo, the main reason we purchased Bridges in 24 Mathematics when we moved to Las Cruces is I learned 25 about this curriculum. What was very attractive to</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">138</p> <p>1 me then -- this was four years ago -- was the fact 2 that we have the trainers here. It's not a program 3 in New York; it's not a program in Chicago. 4 I've used -- as an educator for twenty 5 years, I've used plenty of curriculums. And I think 6 that's one of the few things about the charter 7 schools is that we do get to choose. Of course, 8 there has to be research, and it has to be approved. 9 But the fact that the ladies are here, and 10 we have access to the professional development, and 11 we have access to the material, and they can come 12 and they can do math nights, that is powerful. 13 It's not a person back East -- not that 14 there's anything wrong with people back East -- but 15 it has to be aligned to New Mexico. 16 And we did see -- we did see the scores 17 increase. And I will just share briefly that my 18 daughter was one of the ones that did tutoring with 19 these ladies. And she ended up going to a 20 competition at UNM between the high school kids when 21 she was struggling with her fourth-grade math. So 22 it works. 23 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Good. I have a 24 little note here. Ms. Gipson, LCPS. Is that an NEA 25 school -- an NEA district or an AFT district or --</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">140</p> <p>1 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Just curious. 2 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: If the union 3 comes, it comes. If it doesn't, it doesn't. I 4 don't see it changing the way we would handle 5 anything internally. 6 SECRETARY CARRILLO: That's it for me. I 7 don't have anything else. 8 THE CHAIR: Great. We are in recess. 9 Thank you, all. 10 (Proceedings in recess at 1:56 p.m.) 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">139</p> <p>1 VICE CHAIR GIPSON: They are NEA for 2 certified staff and AFT for support staff. 3 SECRETARY CARRILLO: Okay. Just curious. 4 Have any of you ever worked in a school 5 that -- and what is your experience in -- because it 6 could very well happen. It's happened in Santa Fe. 7 Once somebody wants to open a charter, they're 8 targeted. 9 I want to ask what I want to ask, thank 10 you very much, because we're patient when you guys 11 ask questions. 12 What would your response be if the union 13 targeted your school? 14 MS. CHRISTINA GONZALES: We don't see the 15 union as targeting. The union can be very -- is 16 that better? 17 We currently work at a school that has a 18 union. And while the union is very beneficial for 19 the staff, we feel that it is also very important 20 for the accountability piece to be held. Whether 21 we're in a union or not, the staff has to have the 22 same level of accountability, and that the 23 administrator who is overseeing staff also holds the 24 staff accountable the same way, whether they're in a 25 union or not.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">141</p> <p>1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION 2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO 3 4 5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 6 I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified 7 Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby 8 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true 9 transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW 10 MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State 11 of New Mexico, County of Doña Ana, in the matter 12 therein stated. 13 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my 14 hand on July 21, 2025. 15 16 17 18 Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219 19 BEAN & ASSOCIATES, INC. 20 201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1950 21 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102 22 License Expires: 12/31/25 23 24 25 Job No.: 812P</p>

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State of New Mexico, County of Doña Ana, in the matter therein stated.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand on July 21, 2025.



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