

WASHINGTON STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

)
In Re:)
PUBLIC FORUM)
ASHÉ PREPARATORY ACADEMY)

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Pages 1 - 49

May 29, 2018

6:00 p.m.

Bryn Mawr United Methodist Church
8016 South 116th Street
Seattle, Washington

Reported By:

Connie Church, CCR, RPR, CRR, CRC

Certified Court Reporter #2555

of

CAPITOL PACIFIC REPORTING, INC.

2401 Bristol Court SW, Suite C-103, Olympia, WA 98502

Tel (360) 352-2054 Fax (360) 705-6539 Toll Free (800) 407-0148

www.capitolpacificreporting.com
admin@capitolpacificreporting.com

A P P E A R A N C E S

1

2

3

Charter School Commissioners: GIL MENDOZA
 ELIZABETH COHEN
 MARGIT MCGUIRE
 JESSICA GARCIA
 TRISH MILLINES DZIKO

4

5

6

Executive Director: JOSHUA HALSEY

7

8

Applicant: DR. DEBRA SULLIVAN

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

I N D E X

PAGE NO.

Presentation of applicant

9

P U B L I C C O M M E N T

REKHE BHATT

20

TANYA JOHNSON

21

STEVE SMITH

22

CHARITY KISANGA

23

SUZANNE RIGHI

25

GLORIA BRIGGS

26

KADIN COLEMAN

27

DR. DON FELDER

28

PATRICK D'AMELIO

29

BAIONNE COLEMAN

30

CORY GANN

32

BEVETTE IRVIS

32

BEATRICE BUTLER

33, 42

CAROL SOLOMON

35

DELBERT RICHARDSON

36, 40

JANEL WILLIAMS

38

DOMINIQUE BROOKS

38

SUZETTE ESPINOZA-CRUZ

41

1 BE IT REMEMBERED that on Tuesday, May 29, 2018,
2 at 6:00 p.m., at 8016 South 116th Street, Seattle,
3 Washington, appeared the above before Connie Church,
4 Washington State Certified Court Reporter, residing at
5 Montesano.

6 WHEREUPON the following proceedings were had, to wit:

7

8

9

* * *

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

JOSHUA HALSEY: Can you hear me? Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to get started in the next 60 seconds. And we want to be able to move this along. So if you get a chance, please grab something to eat and then sit down. You'll have some opportunities to get up a little bit later. We're going to get going here in just about two minutes.

(People being seated.)

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

JOSHUA HALSEY: All right, everyone, we're going to go ahead and get started. If I could get you to quick grab a seat. All right. Thank you. So welcome, everyone, to the Charter School Commissions Public Forum for Ashé Preparatory Academy. Before I get going for tonight, I want two individuals who are here with us tonight to introduce themselves. They're here to provide

1 English translation support for those who may need it.
2 So I would like for them to introduce themselves at this
3 point.

4 (Interpreters introduced themselves.)

5 JOSHUA HALSEY: All right. Thank you very much.
6 And for those of you who are wondering, yes, the
7 microphone is on. And this is as good as it's going to
8 get. So with that in mind, I want to just again welcome
9 you to this Public Forum for Ashé Preparatory Academy.
10 My name is Joshua Halsey. And I am going to go ahead and
11 use my teach voice. I am the Executive Director for the
12 Washington State Charter Schools Commission. And we are
13 extremely excited to be with you tonight to hear from
14 Ashé and its leadership team.

15 Each of you has taken time out of your very busy
16 schedules to be with us tonight to listen, to learn, and
17 to share your thoughts on this particular charter school
18 application. It is with this in mind that we are
19 dedicated to creating a safe and civil atmosphere for
20 each and every person. So we want to model what good
21 public discourse looks like for all the young people that
22 are with us tonight. So you may have a different
23 opinion, and that's fine. And we're going to show
24 respect to all those with different opinions tonight and
25 do that in a civil way. We're going to model that for

1 our kids today.

2 So again, welcome. Public forums are opportunities
3 for an applicant to engage directly with the Commission -
4 I'll introduce the commissioners in just a second - as
5 well as public and for the public to hear about the
6 application and to provide input. While the forum itself
7 is independent of the evaluation process, information
8 that is gleaned here tonight will be used to evaluate
9 Ashé Preparatory Academy.

10 The Commission will be meeting next month - yes,
11 it's almost June - on June 21st. That's a Thursday.
12 We'll be here in Seattle, where we will pass resolutions
13 on whether or not to authorize Ashé Preparatory Academy
14 to be a charter school in Washington state.

15 When I get done with my introduction and kind of
16 layout of tonight, we will hear from Ashé's leadership
17 team. We'll hear from Dr. Debra Sullivan as well as
18 Monique Manuel. They will talk with you for about 15
19 minutes, provide you an overview of their particular
20 school.

21 At the conclusion of the 15 minutes, we will open
22 this process up for what we call public comment. We have
23 45 minutes to hear from as many individuals as possible.
24 And I'll give you the details of how that process works
25 in just a minute. At the end of the 45, we'll give an

1 opportunity for Dr. Sullivan and Monique to come back up
2 and provide you with any closing comments. And then that
3 will close out this evening's public forum.

4 So tonight we have five commissioners here with us
5 to hear from the applicant and hear from the public. We
6 have Gil Mendoza. Can you wave, Gil?

7 COMMISSIONER MENDOZA: Hello.

8 JOSHUA HALSEY: Would you like to say anything?

9 COMMISSIONER MENDOZA: No.

10 JOSHUA HALSEY: We have Betsy Cohen. We have
11 Margit McGuire and Jessica Garcia.

12 COMMISSIONER GARCIA: Hi.

13 JOSHUA HALSEY: And Trish Dziko.

14 COMMISSIONER DZIKO: Hi.

15 JOSHUA HALSEY: So while the commissioners are
16 here to listen and learn, if you have questions, I'd just
17 ask you to direct those to myself or any of my staff
18 members or leadership team. Can you guys just get your
19 hands up there. We're here to answer any questions that
20 you might have.

21 Now, we had a sign-in sheet in the back towards
22 where that exit sign is. If you have not signed in,
23 please do so. It's important that you sign in so we have
24 a record of who is with us tonight. This also provides
25 those who want to give oral public comment tonight the

1 opportunity to sign up to do so. If you're interested,
2 you're going to get a white ticket. It's a raffle
3 ticket. Hang onto it. Because at the end of
4 Dr. Sullivan and Monique's presentation, we will randomly
5 draw 20 numbers, which they have been drawn it looks like
6 already. Good. And so if your number on your ticket
7 matches the last three digits, any of those three digits
8 up there, 306, 303 and so forth, then you have the
9 opportunity to provide public comment.

10 The way that works you is get two minutes and it's
11 timed. There'll be a timer in front of you and a timer
12 behind you. Be a good steward of time. There's a lot of
13 you here. I imagine a lot of you would like to give
14 public comment. So please respect the two-minute timer.
15 Folks who need English translation support, you get four
16 minutes to be equitable. Once we get done with the 45
17 minutes, we'll close that out.

18 Keep in mind that when you are giving public
19 comments, slow down. It's really easy to want to get
20 through a lot very quickly. The catch here is that we
21 actually have a court reporter here with us today. Why?
22 Because we have six other commissioners that are not here
23 that want to know what happened. So we take a verbatim
24 transcript of everything that happens. That includes
25 your public testimony. So please be mindful of the pace

1 and your cadence so that we can accurately capture what
2 it is that you've said.

3 If you're unable to give oral comments, you have the
4 opportunity to give written comments. And there's two
5 ways you can do that. One is we have a box in the back.
6 Oh, I'm sorry. Right over here. It's a public comment
7 box. There's pens, paper, envelopes. Jot down your
8 thoughts and drop it in the public comment box. It
9 becomes part of the public record regarding Ashé
10 Preparatory Academy's charter school application. The
11 other way is you can mail us or you can e-mail us your
12 thoughts. The deadline to submit your materials to us or
13 your comments is June 8th. That's next Friday.

14 So again, welcome. I hope you are able to hear me.
15 This is a little awkward. And right now what I'd like to
16 do is I'd like to turn this over to Dr. Sullivan and
17 Monique to give you a presentation of Ashé Preparatory
18 Academy. Dr. Sullivan.

19 (Applause)

20 DR. SULLIVAN: Well, I want to welcome
21 everybody. I want to welcome the commissioners. Oh, am
22 I supposed to use this? I can. We'll see, won't we.
23 Ah ha. I can. I'd like to welcome -- Maybe I can't.
24 I'd like to welcome the Washington State Charter School
25 Commission and definitely all of our Skyway family and

1 community members. And I want to introduce you to the
2 Ashé Prep design team. So there's me. There's Monique
3 Manuel. Could the board members current and future stand
4 up.

5 (Applause)

6 DR. SULLIVAN: Okay. Hang on. I have Marjon
7 Heru. I have Casey Owens. I have - Natalie Hester is
8 our family and community engagement person. I have
9 Jim Valiere here, and I have Suzette Espinoza-Cruz. And
10 we have Dominique Brooks and we have Nnenna Odim.
11 Anybody else here? Because I can't see. I said Dana. I
12 got Dana.

13 So welcome, everybody, and welcome to all of the
14 Ashé Prep supporters. We're really glad to be here and
15 be doing this and taking the next step on this journey.
16 So ah-hah. Is Michael here?

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: No.

18 DR. SULLIVAN: Okay. Michael McGee (phonetic)
19 is one of our community partners also. I'll just tell
20 you a little bit about myself, why I'm doing this work.
21 I started thinking about this school many, many years
22 ago. I was actually 11 years old when I first started
23 thinking about this school. No. Seriously. Fifth
24 grade, Fairmont Park Elementary School. And I thought
25 how can school be different? Why can't school be

1 different?

2 And then I also did this work because I'd run across
3 students who would start school looking happy and joyful.
4 And then by the time they were coming out, they were just
5 like seriously trying to head down the home stretch. And
6 families and parents who were also very much interested
7 in seeing how school could be different.

8 I've worked with teachers, early childhood, P-3,
9 K-8. And what we did in that work when I worked at
10 Pacific Oaks College Northwest is that we had teachers
11 really focus on what are the learning needs of children
12 of color, children learning English and children from
13 low-income families, and what does a classroom look like
14 that implements all those things.

15 Teachers would just say to me, "This is so hard. We
16 don't know what it looks like." I've always wanted a
17 demonstration lab school, and this is my shot at it.

18 So the mission of Ashé Preparatory Academy is to
19 cultivate the genius of a diverse population of students
20 and prepare them to excel in high school, college,
21 career, and to serve as leaders in and for their
22 communities.

23 Ashé is a durable word from West Africa, Nigeria,
24 West Africa. And it means "and so it is." And it really
25 talks about the power of being able to call something

1 into existence, to name it and make it be so. And that's
2 what we wanted Ashé to do and we want Ashé Prep to affirm
3 the power of students and families to really make a
4 difference and produce change.

5 We also wanted to make sure through our vision that
6 all students and graduates know how to take action to
7 improve their communities and their world. We really
8 want to focus on putting school back into the community
9 and putting community back into the school. We want our
10 graduates to be change-makers. Monique Manuel.

11 (Applause)

12 MS. MANUEL: All right. So I'm Monique Manuel.
13 I am the instructional leadership consultant is what I am
14 right now. And so our values when it comes to Ashé Prep
15 are - they're based on the seven principles of Kwanzaa.
16 So we have unity, self-determination, collective
17 work/responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose,
18 creativity and faith/conviction. So we chose these
19 principles because they have cultural significance to the
20 community we are going to serve and are universal values.

21 And so with the meaning with so many other cultures
22 and everything, we serve and promote inclusion and
23 collectivity. So the whole purpose is it talks about
24 inclusion, okay, and the collective responsibility we
25 have to serve our children.

1 Alrighty. So we are looking at beginning Ashé Prep
2 in the fall of 2019 beginning with 150 students in grades
3 K, 1, 2 and 6. And then each year we'll grow five -
4 we'll grow 100 students until we hit capacity in five
5 years. And then would be - we would serve K-8 students
6 in Skyway/West Hill and surrounding communities.

7 Now you get Dr. Sullivan back.

8 DR. SULLIVAN: We're going to go back and forth.
9 So we have participated in over 70 community meetings.
10 And we actually started doing this - well, we started
11 before 2015. But in 2015, we started earnestly working
12 on meeting with the community, meeting with families and
13 meeting with students. So some examples for our
14 community meetings, we work with Skyway Solutions and
15 worked on a lot of their Skyway convenings. We've worked
16 with the Skyway Youth Network Collaborative, which is a
17 collection of agencies and organizations that serve youth
18 in Skyway. And we've also been involved with the Renton
19 Innovation Zone, which is working with four schools,
20 three of which serve our students in the Skyway
21 community.

22 We did a number of parent focus groups asking
23 parents and asking students and asking youth what they
24 would want in a school, what are they looking for. We
25 worked with Somali Parent Education Board, the Somali

1 Youth and Family Club, Community Passageways, which was a
2 number of youth age 18 to about 24, who - some of them
3 who had had run-in's with the law, and asking them again
4 what would make school different, what would have made
5 school better, what could have been a difference for you.
6 And also Family Voices Project through SOAR.

7 We've worked with a number of community agencies and
8 organizations like the Black Child Development Institute,
9 Village Spirit Center, the Black Education Strategy
10 Roundtable, the Road Map Project and several other groups
11 that are really working and looking at what's happening
12 around education and what needs to happen for our youth.

13 Our biggest focus is making sure that we collaborate
14 with the community to implement the Skyway/West Hill
15 action plan. One asset - or one facet I should say - of
16 the Skyway/West Hill action plan, the SWAP, is really
17 looking at educational options. And so we've decided to
18 really think about that actually from birth to adulthood.
19 But this focus is on K-8.

20 As part of our governance structure, we will also
21 have a council of elders that will be people who are
22 activists and advocates who have been talking about
23 educational change for quite some time. They will report
24 directly to our board of directors. And we just wanted
25 again to be responsive to the community and make sure

1 that we're held accountable. Our core model.

2 MS. MANUEL: Alrighty. So our core model comes
3 from all the information feedback that we got from the
4 community meetings. And so one of the things that we
5 heard from people were that teachers needed to be more
6 culturally responsive and that the academics need to be
7 more rigorous. So things that people were saying was
8 have many others teach and learn multiple cultures, being
9 able for the teachers to understand all the cultures that
10 they're having to work with. Civic and community focused
11 thematic projects and studies, basically taking it to the
12 community and have our children work in their communities
13 and figuring out how do I make my community better from
14 their neighborhoods to their cities to our states to the
15 nation to the world.

16 And so that came around because people were saying.
17 And it was the young people's group, the 18 to 24. They
18 want material relevant to today and the future. They
19 wanted group activities and they needed interactions less
20 than lectures. So listening to what our children - their
21 learning styles and what they need is how we're going to
22 - that's how our core model was built.

23 Student leadership development. Our students need
24 to understand they're leaders in the community and
25 finding ways to give them those opportunities. So

1 student leadership and development. I'm going to let her
2 do the last three. So the first three are what we're
3 really building around as far as when we're thinking
4 about our students and what they need to be successful.

5 DR. SULLIVAN: And in order to be successful at
6 anything, whether you're a student or whether you're a
7 grown-up, you have to know what you're talking about.
8 You have to have studied the topic. You have to have
9 some in-depth experiences with it. So we will be having
10 year-round professional development.

11 One of the things that - as Monique pointed out, is
12 that parents have expectations of teachers. Teachers
13 also have expectation of themselves. And in my work with
14 teachers, they want to learn it. But it's like where do
15 you go to find all that stuff and how do you fit that in
16 to the school year? What does it look like? Well it
17 looks like three weeks of professional development in
18 August before school opens and it looks like regular
19 professional development throughout the year where we
20 focus on things like culturally responsive. What is
21 trauma informed practice, where we read the best practice
22 that works for the population of children that we plan to
23 serve.

24 It's also spending time learning about other
25 cultures. I tell teachers all the time, "You need to

1 become cultural anthropologists."

2 It's very difficult to understand the culture of
3 your students if you don't fully understand all the
4 aspects of culture and what makes your own culture. Then
5 you cannot do any compare and contrast. All you can do
6 is say, "It doesn't look like mine or doesn't look like
7 what I'm used to."

8 We have student-centered collectives called the
9 Ujima Teams. Parents want to be involved. We've heard
10 that over and over and over again. But trying to make
11 that connection has been very challenging for them. What
12 we are going to have is Ujima Teams. And Ujima is
13 collective responsibility. It's going to be student-led
14 so it'll be a student, teacher, parent or other family
15 member, and a member of the community and a peer. And
16 the students will look at where do I need to grow; what
17 do I need to change; how do I need to improve; what are
18 my strengths that I need to begin to build on.

19 It also - we are having biannual genius exhibitions.
20 You can't cultivate genius and not let it like shine and
21 show off. So we will definitely have genius exhibitions.
22 I always say every child's pony should get to the front
23 of the merry-go-round. So that will be an opportunity
24 for that to happen.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yay.

1 DR. SULLIVAN: Yay. Location and facilities.
2 We don't have a facility just yet. We are looking.
3 We're looking in Skyway/West Hill. We're looking north
4 Renton, south Seattle. We're looking at 98178. We'll
5 need about 12,000 square feet when we begin and about
6 36,000 by year five.

7 We will have school transportation. Oh, it's in the
8 PowerPoint. Share. Transportation, basic school stuff,
9 ideal features.

10 Fiscal overview: We have startup funding that we're
11 using right now from the Washington Charter School
12 Planning Grant. We have access to a Charter School
13 Program Planning Grant and New School Ventures Fund.
14 We'll have implementation funding that will help us get
15 through the next year before we open. And for long-term
16 sustainability, we want that to happen by year five. And
17 we will have fund-raising for reserves for anything
18 that's unforeseen. And you're going to do that. One
19 more thing. We're going to have the Ujima 1000. Ujima
20 is cooperative economics. And we say a thousand people
21 give \$100 a year for 10 years. We can create a million
22 dollar endowment and everybody gets to participate.

23 MS. MANUEL: Real quick we wanted to recognize
24 our community supporters. And Dr. Sullivan has mentioned
25 some of these already. We have BCDI, the Black Child

1 Development Institute, Skyway Solutions, Education Reform
2 Now, the Community Bay Center for Children, Wellspring
3 Family Services, University of California
4 Los Angeles. All these organizations have written
5 letters of support for us. The BESR, the Black Education
6 Strategies Roundtable, and Village Spirit Center. So
7 those are our community organizations that have put out
8 their support for us. And there you go. Thank you,
9 Asante Sana.

10 (Applause).

11 JOSHUA HALSEY: All right. Thanks so much,
12 Dr. Sullivan, Monique. All right. So we're going to
13 open this up for public comment. So there is a structure
14 to this. And the structure is this: So if you have a
15 ticket, the last three numbers on your ticket, if they
16 match any of the three that are on the big post-it there,
17 please come up over on this side of the room so that we
18 can just swiftly get through each person because we have
19 a 45-minute running clock. We want to hear from as many
20 people as possible.

21 So again, folks that are speaking, two things: One,
22 watch your cadence, so slow down. Second, just look in
23 front of you if you're wondering about the time. There's
24 a laptop right in front of you that's got a clicker on
25 it, that's got a timer. It's clicking down. Be a good

1 steward of time. And we look forward to hearing from as
2 many people as possible.

3 So Krystal, you ready? Oh, thank you. And one last
4 thing, please before you begin, provide us your name for
5 the record. Thank you.

6 MS. BHATT: Good evening, thank you to the
7 Commission staff and Commissioners for the opportunity to
8 speak tonight. I'm Rekha Bhatt, the Chief Program
9 Officer at the Washington State Charter Schools
10 Association. In my role, I support charter leaders and
11 teams across the spectrum of school development. I have
12 had the privilege of working with Dr. Debra Sullivan
13 since 2015 when she set out to make Ashé Prep a reality
14 for the WA Charter School Leadership Fellowship.

15 Unfortunately a few short months into her
16 fellowship, the Washington Charter was put on pause as we
17 endeavored to put a new law in place. Through this
18 uncertain, ambiguous period, Dr. Sullivan quietly
19 continued to work on the school, building support through
20 a community partnership with Skyway Solutions and further
21 honing the academic and cultural model through community
22 creation.

23 The imperative need to start this school was so
24 strong Dr. Sullivan was not going to be discouraged by a
25 volatile political environment. As she is so fond of

1 saying, "This isn't about the grown-ups."

2 Combination of years of her own research about
3 culturally responsive teaching environments, her lived
4 experience in the Seattle region, countless conversations
5 with families and community groups, and best practices
6 from some of our country's highest performing charter
7 schools. Through leadership development, project-based
8 learning in social studies and science and a high scope
9 inspired student-centered approach to math and ELA
10 instruction, Ashé Prep promotes rigor in a setting where
11 all families are welcome because they will see and feel
12 themselves reflected in the school.

13 We need schools in Washington that are born of and
14 led by community change-makers. For this is what shifts
15 paradigms and closes gaps. And that is the intent of our
16 charter law. Ashé Prep does just that. Thus I encourage
17 you to approve this school for a charter. Thank you.

18 (Applause)

19 MS. JOHNSON: Hi. My name is Tanya Johnson. My
20 family has been here in Seattle forever. Born and raised
21 here. My mother-in-law, she works at Wellspring. She
22 actually let us know about Ashé, this program. We're -
23 my husband and I, we're just parents. We're always
24 concerned about our children's education. And initially
25 our oldest daughters went to Zion Preparatory Academy,

1 and that foundation was amazing. And we're just
2 constantly searching for something similar or even at
3 that level.

4 We feel like Ashé would be the next step for our
5 twins. They're three years old. They'll be turning four
6 in July. And we're just waiting for a change. Our
7 children are currently at a center where they're just
8 misunderstood and we just need some direction for our
9 children and we need teachers to understand where our
10 children are at and the level of life they're at at this
11 moment. So we're just ready for change and we just need
12 it. We need it all. So thank you. And we hope that
13 this gets approved.

14 (Applause)

15 MR. SMITH: Good evening. My name is Steve
16 Smith, and I am the Executive Director for the Black
17 Education Strategy Roundtable. We're one of the
18 organizations that have previously submitted letters of
19 support for Ashé. Our mission with the Black Education
20 Strategy Roundtable is to ensure that black students
21 receive a rigorous education in our K-12 public system.
22 And we are supporters of many options, which include
23 charter schools for students, because we've seen this as
24 a viable option.

25 We have been a part of representing Washington state

1 and signing on on the lawsuits that have gone against
2 charter schools in hope that we keep those open as they
3 become a viable option for many of our students in our
4 communities.

5 Why Ashé in particular, are we supportive for this?
6 First of all, Dr. Debra Sullivan and her design team have
7 done a wonderful job of putting together a design for a
8 school to meet the needs of students, especially around
9 the cultivation of the genius of students. Too
10 frequently young students, especially black students,
11 they enter school eager to learn but are soon disengaged
12 from our public school system and they begin to fall out.
13 Our school to prison pipeline is way too strong. And so
14 we need the type of schools that recognize each student
15 as a genius. And so we are very excited for that to come
16 to play.

17 In addition, we know that Dr. Sullivan is a
18 distinguished leader in the work she did. At our
19 conference this past November, she did a workshop on
20 cultivating the genius of students, which was well
21 received by our membership. And so we highly support and
22 encourage the approval of this charter school. Thank
23 you.

24 (Applause)

25 MS. KISANGA: Good evening. My name is Charity

1 Kisanga, also known as Pastor Charity in my community. I
2 am here to talk about the Ashé Preparatory School because
3 I have a passion. I am a teacher in the public schools,
4 a special education teacher, have been that for the last
5 17 years. And I've seen the disparity between the
6 education that we are giving our students, the lack of
7 resources sometimes that are in the southeast region,
8 where I work. And I think that it is a very important
9 move that we are making. I live up the street here, and
10 I know that it is going to be a very important aspect of
11 this community.

12 I know that every child and I believe that every
13 child has potential. And it is up to us, the educators,
14 to bring out that potential. And if we can't do that,
15 then we need to look for where we can do that for these
16 children. They are our future. And if we can't do that
17 for them now, who is going to do it? So it is very
18 important that we think about the children.

19 I have heard Dr. Sullivan talk. Ms. Manuel has
20 worked with me. And I know the passion that they have
21 for our children. I used to work in the African American
22 Academy. That was my first job. And I know that those
23 seven principles worked for those children, and so I am
24 very passionate about what we need to do for our
25 children, especially the black boys.

1 successful.

2 My confidence and commitment in Dr. Sullivan's
3 capacity to build a team that will then have a legacy
4 that we can continue on for generations is twofold and
5 ongoing. I am honored to be able to stand here and tell
6 you that Dr. Sullivan changed my life as an educator.
7 And I know that the children who will benefit from Ashé
8 Prep's lives will be changed as well. Thank you.

9 (Applause)

10 MS. BRIGGS: Hi. Good evening. My name is
11 Gloria Briggs. And I come to you guys this evening as
12 the Board President for Skyway Solutions and also as a
13 community member. I live in 98178. I have resided here
14 on the hill for the past thirty-some years. I have
15 raised three children here as well. My older two
16 children were sent away from 98178 to get a better
17 education. We have four failing schools up here. Ashé
18 Prep is something that is needed. We are not serving the
19 children that are up here, and specifically our children
20 of color.

21 My children went to the African American Academy and
22 Zion Prep. So to have this type of Afrocentric and just
23 curriculum that is based on their culture is very
24 important and it's something that is just highly needed.
25 And I just want to say that I support Ashé Prep. I

1 support . . .

2 I thank you, Debra. Where did she go? I just thank
3 you. I thank you for just bringing this opportunity to
4 us. I was one of the main parents. I have been
5 complaining for the past 10 years while raising my
6 children up here. When are we going to have a change?
7 This is our change. This is our opportunity to give our
8 children something refreshing, to have an alternative of
9 something that is not working that - is working because
10 we know what isn't working. And I just want to say I
11 support Ashé Prep and to please approve Ashé Prep as a
12 charter school in 98178.

13 (Applause)

14 MR. COLEMAN: Hi. My name is Kadin Coleman.
15 And I think charter schools are very important because of
16 when I first started going to school, I went to a private
17 school and I thought they did a really good job teaching
18 me there. And what happened was that there wasn't very
19 many individuals or teachers of color there and so I got
20 picked on a lot.

21 And so what happened was I ended up going to a new
22 school after third grade. And the school I'm going to
23 right now, it has - I made friends really quickly because
24 there's a lot of kids of color that I was able to meet.
25 And I was really happy with that. But the problem was

1 they are teeny-weeny but then I see the dullness in their
2 face when they've reached that high school stage.

3 So I'm looking at Ashé as an opportunity to create
4 these models by which public schools can begin to see
5 what excellence looks like for our children. Because I
6 know one thing that's going to happen is when I look over
7 there and I see miracles happening, I imagine that that's
8 what's going to happen every single day in Ashé.

9 And I just want to say thank you for allowing me to
10 submit an application to be on the Ashé elders committee.

11 (Applause)

12 MR. D'AMELIO: Good evening. My name is Patrick
13 D'Amelio. I'm the CEO of the Washington State Charter
14 Schools Association. And I have a bunch of notes about
15 what I'm supposed to say but I think I'll set them to the
16 side. Most of this is a matter of record, and Debra has
17 already noted some of the supports that my organization
18 can and is very, very happy to provide to Debra and her
19 team. But none of that really matters. I think what
20 matters is a couple of things, at least what comes to
21 mind.

22 This is the right community. We know the divide
23 between black and white students, the fact that we
24 continue to fail too many students for too long.

25 We know that this community has created and

1 expressed a demand.

2 We know that this is the right person in the form of
3 Debra and, by extension, her team and the folks that are
4 in this room that are prepared because of years of
5 personal biography, experience, education, passion and
6 heartfelt commitment to get these issues right.

7 And we know that the time is right because we cannot
8 wait for things to change. We have to create the change.
9 I personally believe, my organization believes, that
10 Debra, the Ashé Prep team, are ready to create that
11 change. So we offer our endorsement and our pledge of
12 support for the years to come. We hope you'll approve
13 this application. Thank you.

14 (Applause)

15 MS. COLEMAN: Hi. My name is Baionne Coleman.
16 I grew up here in Seattle, Washington. And I am a direct
17 product of Dr. Sullivan's work with students. I went to
18 St. Therese School, which is now St. Therese Academy.
19 And Dr. Sullivan always had the mentality that it takes a
20 village to raise a child. She always pushed into us
21 greatness. When you look at her children, you see the
22 greatness in them. When you look at her grandchildren,
23 you see the greatness in them.

24 And I'm excited because I have nieces and nephews
25 that do not have an option and are going to a school that

1 is failing them. And with Ashé Prep being here in the
2 community, they will no longer be failed but they will
3 have that same type of genius that I was allowed to have
4 with Dr. Sullivan and the other - the parents and the
5 families and the teachers, Mr. Valiere back there, that I
6 got to have from St. Therese.

7 And so you know, you heard my son come up and talk
8 earlier about his experiences. You know. He's in a
9 district school right now. And for a 10-year-old young
10 man to be able to tell you that the school is failing
11 him, that's not something he prepped with me. Like
12 that's from him. You know. For him to be able to come
13 here and stand in front of you and say, "The schools are
14 failing me; I'm able to make friends; I'm still having
15 issues but the schools are failing me;" and then for him
16 to be able to go to Rainier Prep and walk out the door
17 and say may, "Mom, I think this is going to be good for
18 me; I think I'm going to get the education that I need
19 and the people care about me and they love me;" already
20 just from two hours of being there, like that's something
21 amazing.

22 And that's what all students deserve rather than
23 being put into prison. So I hope you approve it. Thank
24 you.

25 (Applause)

1 MR. GANN: My name is Cory Gann. I'm a retired
2 professor of teacher education from Central Washington
3 University. There's a large term out in the world these
4 days, implicit bias. I think that word needs to have an
5 associated word, which is implicit genius. And I think
6 we need to develop that word. That - I have supervised
7 in so many classrooms in so many schools throughout the
8 south King County area of where implicit genius of
9 children of color is not recognized. It's not even seen.

10 And that's what Ashé Academy offers the potential to
11 do, the obligation to do. And that's where it's really
12 going to make a transformative contribution to education
13 throughout the state and I think throughout the nation.
14 So I really, really endorse this application. Thank you.

15 (Applause)

16 MS. IRVIS: Good evening. My name is Bevette
17 Irvis. And I'm the Early Learning Director at Wellspring
18 Family Services.

19 AUDIENCE: Woo-hoo.

20 MS. IRVIS: And I work primarily with families
21 that are experiencing homelessness. The majority of them
22 are people of color and most importantly the African
23 American or black African.

24 So I'm excited to be here tonight to speak in
25 support of Dr. Sullivan and Ashé Preparatory Academy.

1 I've had the pleasure of knowing Dr. Sullivan for many
2 years. And most recently I served with her as a planning
3 member of the cultivating genius of black children
4 workshops. So as others have stated, Dr. Sullivan is a
5 visionary and a passionate educator for all children, but
6 most importantly for African American children.

7 Seattle Public Schools as a system is not meeting
8 the educational needs of children that it serves.
9 Dr. Sullivan's vision for Ashé Preparatory Academy will
10 fill this void, cultivating and celebrating the genius
11 not only of the students but also of their caregivers.

12 Dr. Sullivan holds the community in mind, and
13 community involvement will be an integral part of the
14 learning environment. I'm a big fan of Dr. Sullivan as a
15 leader and educator. And I believe that she will create
16 a learning environment - learning community that will
17 funnel students into - get right what I said - follow
18 them into the pipeline to success rather than the
19 pipeline to prison.

20 (Applause)

21 MS. BUTLER: I'm so short. Good evening. My
22 name is Beatrice Butler. I am an elementary school
23 assistant principal. I am a product of Dr. Debra
24 Sullivan, Pacific Coast College Northwest. And I am also
25 the proud treasurer of BCDI. We work with children and

1 communities. We work with educators. We work with all
2 people.

3 One of the things and one of the brilliances behind
4 Ashé Preparatory Academy is that Ashé is about all
5 children learning about themselves. It's about them
6 learning about their culture, learning about where they
7 come from. One of our great problems in education is
8 that our children don't know where they come from. They
9 don't understand that they come from kings and queens.
10 They need to understand they come from brilliant
11 mathematicians, that most people, if you look in the
12 research in history, they went to Africa to get educated.
13 It wasn't backwards. We've been taught the opposite way.
14 So it's our job to educate our children.

15 I started in elementary school. We went to a
16 village school outside of Yakima, Washington. It was
17 Selah. And my father helped build a village school. It
18 was important for us to learn about language, learn about
19 our culture. And it's even more so important now. We
20 have so much exposure to other things that are going
21 around the world, things that our children should not be
22 privy too, that we need to start focusing on their mind,
23 their mind, and reach their soul and their heart so they
24 can share like this young man shared. He shared from his
25 heart how he was feeling.

1 We always want to shut our children down. At Ashé
2 Prep, they're not going to be shut down. They're going
3 to be given opportunity to voice their opinions. They're
4 going to be given opportunity to show their genius.
5 Cultivating the genius, that's our job. That's each and
6 every one of our jobs. I endorse Ashé Prep Academy and
7 hope you endorse it. Thank you.

8 (Applause)

9 MS. SOLOMON: Kind of tall. My name is Carol
10 Solomon and I hope that you do approve this. It is
11 overdue. I'm a friend of Dr. Sullivan's and also a
12 student. I have learned a lot from her. I first met her
13 when she was at Praxis years ago. And I'm a preschool
14 teacher and I also teach kindergarten.

15 And why I say this is overdue, because Seattle
16 Public Schools are still failing our children. I know -
17 I don't know how many of you have children or
18 grandchildren in the public school system, but so often
19 our children don't get the opportunity to learn from
20 people who look like them or even see themselves in the
21 textbooks. History - a lot of the historical textbooks
22 we use are not based on fact.

23 A prime example is Memorial Day. Memorial Day was
24 created by the black soldiers coming out of world war -
25 the Civil War and the buffalo soldiers. And it was

1 co-opted. So it's important for everyone to know and
2 read their history.

3 And I feel that this is your opportunity to make a
4 shift in the paradigm so that it will level the playing
5 field and give equity to children of color and also shift
6 the paradigm for the parents of children of color and
7 especially African American males and to make the
8 community stronger and more vibrant. Because as one lady
9 said, these children are not only our future, but they're
10 your future as well. So I thank you.

11 (Applause)

12 MR. RICHARDSON: Hello. Hello. My name is
13 Delbert Richardson. Two minutes. Okay. Just put it
14 into context. Some of you know me and some of you don't.
15 My name is Delbert Richardson. I'm a second generation
16 storyteller and I have a traveling museum. What's so
17 important about me being here - and I'm so proud of
18 Dr. Sullivan and her team - we're actually on a parallel
19 path. She has a school and I have a museum. And what I
20 believe is we have gotten tired of giving our children
21 that people don't have their best interests.

22 So rather than complaining, the question becomes my
23 favorite song by Michael Jackson is the Man in the
24 Mirror. So the question becomes it's not what have you
25 done; what am I willing to do for my children. So I'm so

1 proud that we've taken the responsibility of taking back
2 our children because that's our responsibility. You
3 know.

4 For those that don't know, in the back there is a
5 small display of everyday items that African Americans
6 invented, patented and improved upon. And the young man
7 that came up here really stole my heart. Because what I
8 know is children want primarily two things, a
9 relationship and a sense of belonging. And that's what
10 they're not getting in public schools. So what I
11 strongly believe and feel that Ashé Academy is not only
12 going to give them a sense of belonging and a sense of
13 relationship, but it'll give them their history because
14 they got Delbert to support the curriculum.

15 And this is so important because I think what's so
16 tragic is that white America a lot of times feels like
17 they have to know. And that's not true. And it takes a
18 village to raise children. But you gotta allow the
19 village to help the process of teaching. So I'm going to
20 continue to advocate for the best.

21 And I love cultivating the genius because it
22 operates from a belief that they're already genius. We
23 just need to make them aware so they can change the
24 world. Thank you very much.

25 (Applause)

1 MS. WILLIAMS: Hello. My name is Janel Williams
2 (phonetic). I went to St. Therese from kindergarten
3 until the sixth grade, went to Zion my seventh grade
4 year, and then I went to Dimmitt my eighth grade year.
5 And when I tell you the absolute complete culture shock,
6 like I can't imagine that I had to go back to my
7 St. Therese to go back to my community to have support,
8 like I still do with those people today.

9 And the people that I know from dim it, honestly,
10 when I look at on both hands, they're not doing like my
11 St. Therese people are doing who come from that
12 community. We still hang out. We still see each other.
13 We do good things. Like we'll go have dinner at
14 somebody's house and just chill. They want to go get in
15 some trouble. They want to go do some things like if
16 they're not already in jail, go visit them or something.
17 It literally is absolutely ridiculous. It's crazy. It's
18 scary to know that these are 38 nieces and nephews and
19 where are they going to go? Like what are we do for
20 them?

21 I need the community, not just like my own family.
22 Like absolutely something has to happen. Like seriously.
23 Okay. Thank you.

24 (Applause)

25 MR. BROOKS: My name is Dominique. I'm a board

1 member of Ashé Preparatory and owner of a corporation,
2 Sports Integrated. I'm from Seattle, Washington myself.
3 And so I want to ask everybody here that has a friend or
4 family member, a brother, sister, auntie, niece, nephew
5 that is in this community or from this community, for you
6 to raise your hand.

7 With that show of hands, everybody here, you guys
8 just - you guys deserve a change. You guys deserve a
9 difference.

10 When I met Dr. Sullivan, she grabbed me and she
11 whisked me under her wing. And one of the things that I
12 learned from Dr. Sullivan is that there's a standard and
13 that I challenge everyone in here to look into
14 themselves, look into their future, look into their kids
15 and say, "Hey, that standard it's not negotiable. It's
16 not budging. That the bar is here and this is where you
17 have to be. And if you fall short, I'm here to pick you
18 up and help you get right back to that bar. I have
19 complete faith in Ms. Sullivan. I have complete faith in
20 the design team, that they're going to be there for you
21 and for your family. They're going to hold you
22 accountable, but they're also going to be your biggest
23 cheerleader."

24 And with that being said, I will ask you that you
25 guys desperately approve Ashé Preparatory because Ashé

1 Preparatory is a place where dreams - there's a
2 foundation and for people to learn, grow and prosper and
3 then come back and give to this great community. Thank
4 you guys for your time.

5 (Applause)

6 MS. STARWICH: So we have a few more minutes on
7 our running clock. So if anyone's in here that felt like
8 their point of view wasn't expressed or wants to support
9 what other people have said, you're welcome to come up at
10 this time. We'll just keep it going with our two-minute
11 limit until we reach our time limit.

12 MR. RICHARDSON: How much time do I have? No,
13 no, no. I just wanted - because of constraints of time,
14 some things I didn't share. And I just wanted to talk
15 about data, right, because I want to believe that we all
16 sometimes impacted by data, be it positive or negative.
17 But one thing that I want to point out is a letter that
18 was written about my work by the Road Map Project, by
19 Dr. Shelby Cooley. And what's more importantly about the
20 data, it says that "Children of color who experience
21 racial bias have elevated risk for long-term dangerous
22 outcomes such as decreased motivation, lower academic
23 achievement, increased anxiety and depressed
24 symptomology." That's cited by Kaiser, Neblett and
25 Seaton.

1 Here's the point. Researchers found that fostering
2 strong racial identities for children of color and
3 specifically among children of African descent serves as
4 a critical protective factor as they engage in a world of
5 prejudice and bias. Okay. Thank you very much.

6 MS. ESPINOZA-CRUZ: I'd like to introduce
7 myself. My name is Suzette Espinoza-Cruz. And I'm the
8 mother of a 10-year-old child who goes to . . . I live
9 one block away from here and my fourth grader goes to
10 school here in the Renton/Skyway area. We moved here
11 from the Seattle area. My son has struggled since
12 kindergarten because he is considered twice exceptional.
13 He had a diagnosis of ADHD and has been on a 504 plan and
14 is now on a special education plan. His challenges are
15 because he is reading at high school level and he's in
16 fourth grade, he struggles with being bullied, has been
17 struggling with being bullied since he was in
18 kindergarten.

19 I was so excited to find out that Dr. Sullivan was
20 putting this school together. As a parent who is raising
21 a child in this Skyway/West Hill area, I'm terrified of
22 what his future holds for him if he has to go to the
23 public school choice that we have in this area. And I
24 know that I can't afford to send him to private school.
25 So I am giving a hundred percent support to this school

1 and I'm very excited that we can have a school like this
2 for Latino kids like my son Oslin (phonetic). Thank you.

3 MS. BUTLER: Not to be outdone, Delbert. Again,
4 I'm Beatrice Butler. What I wanted to say and I didn't
5 have time to say is that you also have to look at the
6 team, the team that's surrounding and supporting
7 Dr. Sullivan and her work. As you prepare that team and
8 she is working on her team, building her team, like
9 Ms. Monique Manuel and like Ms. Charity co Mel, you look
10 at the people that are part of that team and their
11 quality and what they're offering and what they're
12 bringing to the community of Ashé. Because it is a
13 community, you need to look at that, see that she's taken
14 the steps that she should be taking.

15 They're working in unity. They're working as a
16 team. And they're working for the children. They're not
17 working for themselves. I know we hear a lot of, "Oh,
18 Dr. Debra Sullivan." And she knows I love her. But it's
19 not about that. It's about Ashé Prep. It's about the
20 children. It's about what needs to happen here in this
21 community now.

22 We waited and we talk about change. It's our
23 responsibility to make that change happen. We are change
24 agents. Sometimes we sit quietly aside and not thinking
25 the power that we have within. We are change agents and

1 we want our children to be change agents. And if we
2 don't teach them, we can't hold them accountable if
3 they're not making change. If we don't teach them, we
4 can't say, "Oh, that's just a Béb  kid." Some of you
5 know what B b  kids are.

6 So we're looking for the community to be involved.
7 I know Dr. Sullivan. I know Ms. Manuel. They're looking
8 for the community to be involved. It's not just this
9 community forum, one day. They're looking for the
10 community to be involved because they need to be invested
11 in their children. So look at the team. See the
12 strength and the power of the team.

13 So I didn't get a chance to say that. I said it
14 now. Thank you.

15 (Applause)

16 JOSHUA HALSEY: All right. Thanks everybody
17 that was able to provide public comment. Again, if you
18 weren't able to do that or just don't feel comfortable
19 standing in front of almost a hundred people, I
20 understand. Please write down your thoughts. We'd love
21 to hear from you.

22 Dr. Sullivan, would you like to come up?

23 DR. SULLIVAN: I would.

24 JOSHUA HALSEY: Awesome. So Dr. Sullivan, this
25 is your opportunity to address the group, anything that

1 you heard that you wanted to address or any closing
2 thoughts.

3 DR. SULLIVAN: I think if I can take a couple of
4 questions if people want to ask a couple of questions.

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you have a website if
6 people want to learn more about Ashé?

7 DR. SULLIVAN: We are in the process of putting
8 up our website now. Yes. It should be soon.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was just thinking about the
10 timeline. So I think you put a slide up there briefly.
11 Is that enough time to do everything you have to do?

12 DR. SULLIVAN: There is never enough time to do
13 everything that you have to do. However, the time will
14 come. So we await approval authorization. And if
15 authorized, we will have a year for startup. And that
16 will begin in July. And then the school will open in
17 August of 2019. And then we'll phase it in.

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Dr. Sullivan, from other
19 charter schools that have already started, what have you
20 learned from them and how has that impacted your plans
21 for Ashé?

22 DR. SULLIVAN: Well, one of the things that I
23 got to observe in looking at charter schools here in
24 Washington but also in New Orleans and also in the Bay
25 Area in Sacramento is that there's so much community

1 engagement. And I think that's the most important part.
2 I think often parents feel like they're left out of the
3 equation, like kids come with no grownup. And they want
4 to be a part of the equation. And that can't always
5 happen in the schools. What I've seen in a lot of the
6 other charter schools is out in the community, so outside
7 of the school building walls.

8 Another thing that I've seen in many of the other
9 charter schools is high expectations, where children -
10 basically it's like you're teaching to mastery, not
11 teaching to find out where you land on the bell curve but
12 teaching to mastery. And I think that was really
13 important to see.

14 And just looking at the . . . We were there at some
15 schools in the morning when the children were arriving by
16 bus. And just being able to see the look on the kids'
17 faces. The older kids came in looking tired because
18 that's what older kids do; they look tired. But kids
19 were excited and they saw their teachers and they saw
20 their principal. And we just saw really exciting ways
21 that the teachers were engaged with the children and the
22 school was engaged with the community. I really
23 appreciated that a lot, that and a lot of curriculum
24 choices. Yes, Kevin.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: When you and the design team

1 were working on Ashé, you and the team have a deep
2 background in education. Were there two or three things
3 that you wanted to make sure Ashé had that's missing in
4 schools serving kids here in the area?

5 DR. SULLIVAN: Well, one of the biggest things -
6 and I tell people this all the time - so it was literally
7 like 516 pages. So it's literally thinking about a
8 school from the very ground up.

9 And one of the chapters that I had to write about
10 was the discipline policy. And I thought about that.
11 And how - how do you discipline children who don't feel
12 like they belong to the community? That to me is kinda
13 mean, that you can get disciplined but you don't feel
14 like you belong.

15 So with my discipline policy, I started with a
16 belonging policy. So the very first policy is everybody
17 belongs. You don't have to all agree. You don't have to
18 all, you know . . . You do have to get along. But you
19 don't have to agree. You don't have to have the same
20 perspective. But everybody belongs. And if you
21 belong . . .

22 It's like children; right? If you have children,
23 nobody says, "If you mess up your room one more time,
24 you're going to be suspended from the family for a week."
25 Nobody says that. Well, somebody might. But then

1 somebody's already made that phone call, right, to CPS?

2 But what happens is children want to belong. They
3 want to belong. And so you are doing that with their
4 cooperation. So a belonging policy is basically making
5 sure kids want to belong and making sure that the other
6 grown-ups want them to belong. So that was one of the
7 primary things in writing it.

8 And then like I said, academic rigor. We look at
9 kids. We used to be kids. We thought we could learn
10 everything. And then we got to school and, "Oh, you
11 can't learn that until third grade. That doesn't happen
12 until 11:45."

13 Where is the part where you just want to go and
14 learn? So I wanted to make sure I created an environment
15 where children can learn the things they have to and the
16 things that they want to. So that part was really
17 important.

18 And then like I said, the cultural responsiveness,
19 just really thinking about how do you bring community
20 into the school. For those of you who don't know the way
21 Ashé Prep is going to be set up is kindergarten is My
22 Neighborhood; first grade is My City; second grade My
23 State; third grade My Region; fourth grade My Country;
24 fifth grade My Continent; and middle school My World.
25 Yeah. That's what I said. Wow. We can do that.

1 So really being able to make the community and the
2 children's lives part of what they're doing in their
3 classroom experiences. Is that it?

4 (Applause)

5 JOSHUA HALSEY: So thank you, everyone, for
6 coming. That's going to conclude the public forum.
7 Dr. Sullivan, are you going to be hanging out a little
8 bit longer for folks that have questions?

9 DR. SULLIVAN: Yes.

10 JOSHUA HALSEY: All right. So I just want to
11 say on behalf of the Commission, thank you for having us
12 out to your community. Again, our Commission meeting is
13 a public meeting. It is on June 21st. It is a Thursday.
14 We generally do our resolutions in the morning if you'd
15 like to come. Please check out our website. Information
16 is in the back of how to find us. Also Ashé's
17 application is also on our website if you'd like to look
18 at that. With that, thanks for coming out tonight and
19 good night.

20 (Concluded at 7:20 p.m.)

21
22
23
24
25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, CONNIE CHURCH, a Certified Court Reporter in and for the State of Washington, residing at Montesano, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were reported by me and thereafter reduced to a typed format under my direction; that the transcript, consisting of pages 1-49, is a full, true and complete transcript of said proceedings;

That as a CCR in this state, I am bound by the Rules of Conduct as Codified in WAC 308-14-130; that court reporting arrangements and fees in this case are offered to all parties on equal terms;

That I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any party to this action, or relative or employee of any such attorney or counsel, and I am not financially interested in the said action or the outcome thereof;

That upon completion, the original transcript will be securely sealed and served upon the appropriate party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 1st day of June, 2018.

Connie Church



CONNIE CHURCH
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER #2555