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Regarding State Auditor Findings

Olympia, WA – The Washington State Charter School Commission issued the following statement from Commissioner Christine Varela, following the publication of the State Auditor’s Office findings.

“We are concerned that this audit shows a breakdown in internal controls in the 2019-20 school year at Summit Public Schools led to teachers with incomplete certification in Washington serving in the classroom. While the errors identified are two years past and appear to be corrected prior to this audit, our expectation is that the school leaders will fully cooperate with the remediations outlined in the Auditor’s report,” **said Commissioner Christine Varela.** “The SAO report also validated concerns expressed previously by the Commission specific to governing capacity. Looking ahead, the Commission will continue to monitor Summit to ensure they’re operating in alignment with the authorized educational, organizational, and financial plans developed to meet the needs of students and families in their community.”

Every charter public school authorized in Washington has executed a contract between a qualified provider and an authorizer that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities and performance expectations for each school. Responsibility for affirming teacher certification rests with the leadership of each respective charter public school, who formally attest certification to the Commission. The Auditor’s findings have nothing to do with student safety or academic outcomes but there is a clear requirement that Summit fully resolve the audit findings including financial repayment. While the remediation process is outside of the Commission’s regulatory purview, SAO findings help inform its deliberations and recommendations concerning school renewals and interventions.

Charter public school teachers are subject to the same certification requirements as any other public school teachers, just as students have to take the same standardized tests as their peers in traditional public schools. Summit has affirmed that all of the individuals whose certificates were not complete have completed the paperwork and updated their qualifications for Washington State.

About Washington State’s Charter School Commission

Washington State’s Charter School Commission was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and to hold charter public schools accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout Washington with an emphasis on schools designed to expand opportunities for “at-risk” students, providing leadership and oversight that is consistent with national principles and standards of charter school authorizers and the provisions of Washington’s charter school law.

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