



**For Immediate Release:**  
September 18, 2024

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## **New Executive Director Selected by Washington State Charter School Commission**

*Interim Executive Director Marcus Harden accepts full-time role following search process led by the Washington Charter School Commission. Harden previously served as the agency's Deputy Director and interim Executive Director*

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**Olympia, WA** – Today the Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) announced its selection of Marcus Harden to serve as its next Executive Director. The Commission serves as the main authorizer of charter public schools in Washington in a multi-part system of oversight and accountability. Harden, who previously served as deputy director, [has served as interim executive](#) director since September 5 and his official start date as executive director is 9.17.2024. The director reports directly to the [Commission](#), overseeing a staff of 6. The 11-person Commission can serve up to two, four-year terms and are appointed by the governor, State Senate majority, State Senate minority, State House majority and State House minority. Additionally, the State Board of Education and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) each appoint designees to serve on the Commission. The agency monitors and provides oversight of charter public schools in our state, upholding strict accountability in exchange for greater flexibility for serving students.

“We are thrilled that Marcus and the entire Commission team will lead this agency into its next chapter, including the upcoming launch of our new Strategic Plan. We know that he is already hard at work engaging directly with school leaders in his vision of a transparent, effective and modern authorizer of charter public schools,” said **Commission Chair Christine Varela**, “The Charter School Commission is committed to upholding the integral part of our broader public school community represented in the community-driven learning environments of charter public schools.”

Harden accepted an official offer by the Commission after a [public vote](#) by its members, which includes a compensation package in alignment with analogous public school officials in our state.

Originally from South Seattle, Harden has served in K–12 education as a teacher, counselor, dean, assistant principal, principal, chief academic officer, state and federal policy advocate, professional developer,

keynote speaker, senior director of academics, and school founder for 23 years. He is a University of Washington Husky alumni (Danforth School of Education and UW Distinguished Alumni winner). He is the co-founder of the Academy for Creating Excellence, an organization committed to cultivating the innate brilliance in young men of color through authentic and intentional love and dignity. Harden is also a founding team member of Overtime Elite, a one-of-a-kind professional basketball league that supports traditional high school education and the development of life skills while supporting the promise of young athletes.

“It is an honor to accept this leadership role in a unique time in public education and as part of a team that is unwavering in support of charter public schools in our state,” said **incoming executive director Harden**. “We serve alongside our peer state agencies in public education, but I want to especially commend our incredible staff in their work with charter public school families, charter public school staff, teachers, leaders and students who may need a different option than a traditional public school.”

The Washington State Charter School Commission is an independent state agency and the [main authorizer](#) of charter public schools. It was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process for qualified non-profits who wish to open a charter public school. The agency also monitors and provides oversight holding schools and charter public school boards accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission was formed following the passage of Initiative 1240 by state voters in 2012, which created the charter public school system in our state. In Washington, all charter public schools are tuition-free, non-sectarian, open to all students, publicly-funded, staffed by certified teachers, and held accountable to the same state and national standards as traditional public schools.

To learn more about the Commission, its responsibilities and charter public schools in Washington, please visit our website: <https://charterschool.wa.gov>.

**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 charters accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout 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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