



May 11, 2023

Dear PASD School Board,

Thank you for considering the following facts as you weigh your decision about renewing Gillingham's Charter. The education of 254 students depends on you to do the right thing.

**Fact #1**

**Gillingham Charter is well within the certification requirements.**

We'd first like to address the alleged "partial or completely inaccurate" information for 20 staff members on the PDE 414, regarding teacher schedules and job descriptions.

At no time did the administration or the district's counsel reach out with questions or concerns about the information provided and its accuracy. Given that the district was willing to recommend charter renewal before the alleged concerns regarding certifications for the 2021-2022 school year were raised, Gillingham Charter School decided to hire an outside consultant to check Gillingham's certification percentage for that year. Gillingham hired Alexander Schuh, Ph. D. to perform this outside audit. Please see the attached document for Dr. Schuh's credentials.

In his audit, Dr. Schuh reviewed the TIMS for accuracy. According to his calculations, Gillingham had an 84.5% teacher certification rate in 2021-2022. We are also on track to exceed the 75% certification requirement for the 2022-2023 school year, although no formal calculation can be done until the year is concluded. Dr. Schuh's calculations are included in this packet for your review.

**Fact #2**

**The majority of Gillingham Charter School students are Schuylkill County students.**

Next, we'd like to address the statement alleging "GCS has an insufficient number of students from Schuylkill County." During any given month throughout the school year, Gillingham has never had more than 13 students enrolled at any time from a county outside of Schuylkill. Since 2019, we average 11 "out-of-county" students and 239 Schuylkill County students.

Yearly details are below:

2019-2020 school year - Gillingham had at most 13 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 250 students.

2020-2021 school year - Gillingham had at most 13 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 230 students.

2021-2022 school year - Gillingham had at most 7 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 230 students.

2022-2023 school year - Gillingham had at most 10 students from outside Schuylkill County out of an average total enrollment of 244 students.

As you know, the Charter School Law makes all students eligible for enrollment in a charter school. Gillingham is not permitted to discriminate in admissions against students who reside outside of Schuylkill County, although in accordance with the law, we give preference to those students who reside in the Pottsville Area School District. That students from outside the county want to enroll in Gillingham, despite the distance, is a testament to the strength of Gillingham's education model.

### **Fact #3**

#### **Gillingham Charter currently has only one open teaching position.**

It was alleged that Gillingham Charter School has a high turnover rate among our teaching staff. Like other schools, Gillingham was impacted by the Great Resignation following the COVID-19 Pandemic. See attached documentation providing national statistics on the Great Resignation among educators.

That said, we are proud of our ability to attract strong candidates to replace educators who have decided to choose a different path. As stated above, our only open position is for an Art Educator. In comparison, PASD has far more open positions as indicated on the website: <https://www.pottsville.k12.pa.us/Page/298>.

### **Fact #4**

#### **Gillingham's attendance rate is similar to Pottsville Area School District's.**

You will see on futurereadypa.org for the 2020-2021 school year, Gillingham's percentage of students with regular attendance was 70.1%. PASD's percentages were 68.2% at the high school, 38.5% at the middle school, and 73.6% at the elementary school.

**Fact #5**

**The additional factors listed by the board's president on April 16 were not an issue in the final charter proposal presented by PASD.**

The district's administration and legal team spent eight months negotiating a charter with Gillingham's administration and legal team. On April 14, Gillingham sent the administration an agreement to the final charter proposal. Then on April 18, the board president stated that the final agreement would not be presented. For eight months the additional factors, those listed by the board president at the end of his statement, were not enough to prevent negotiations.

**Fact #6**

**Pennsylvania's Charter School Appeal Board (CAB) granted Gillingham's initial charter and its renewal charter.**

CAB historically dismisses PASD allegations and renews Gillingham's charter. We are confident in the facts we have presented in this packet and would prefer not to needlessly waste taxpayer dollars on legal fees. We would rather educate than litigate.

If the Board has continued concerns, Gillingham would be happy to discuss them with the Board. We would appreciate the opportunity to continue collaborating with PASD before more taxpayer money is spent on this.

Sincerely,

*Nicolle Hutchinson*

Nicolle Hutchinson  
Executive Director  
Gillingham Charter School

CC:

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