

Cynthia Roy
New Bedford, MA 02744

February 13, 2019

New Bedford City Council
133 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Re: Alma del Mar Charter School Expansion

To the New Bedford City Council:

As you are aware, in 2016, New Bedford voters, along with the rest of Massachusetts, overwhelmingly rejected Question 2 -- the expansion of charter schools -- despite massive lobbying efforts from the private sector.

New Bedford voted to protect our public schools from privatization, to keep taxpayer money out of privately run charters, and to support educational institutions which are accountable to democratic oversight and which serve *all* students.

Despite this, Mayor Mitchell and Superintendent Anderson have struck a deal with Alma del Mar's Will Gardner and Commissioner Riley to expand the number of charter seats in New Bedford and give school property to the charter to accommodate the expansion. Shamefully, this was decided upon without input from the school committee, parents, and teachers.

In essence, they are forcing the community, against their wishes, to accept and pay for a privately run charter which will siphon money from our already grossly underfunded public schools.

Mr. Gardner and Massachusetts Charter Public School Association lobbyists have fought aggressively for DESE's attention and for what serves them well, but so can we.

Amending the charter to increase seats is a backdoor way to shutter the will of the people and undermine public education. New Bedford is setting a precedent for cities and school districts across Massachusetts. In fact, the nation is paying attention to this critical moment in public education.

As stated, New Bedford said "NO!" to charters. I urge you to show your constituents that you heard them and that you believe in our meaningful democracy. A few weeks ago I wrote asking you to take action on this issue. This time, I'm specifically asking you not to approve the transfer of the Kempton building to Alma. The deal has been framed as a compromise and an innovative deal, but it isn't. We're giving a public building to a privately run charter and Alma will likely continue to seek expansion in the following years.

This isn't a "done deal" as it's been portrayed by the Mayor. Alma doesn't have to inherit a building. And our state legislature would need to act in order to amend Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 89 and enable neighborhood charter schools.

Alma isn't the savior it is pitched to be. A recent, comprehensive data analysis outlined in ["Numbers Don't Lie"](#) reveals the truth about Alma's "achievement." And it comes at no surprise. Because, since when do businessmen know more about education than professional educators?

We all have the power to protect our public schools and resist privatization. I am trying my best to fight to support an educational system which serves all of us and I ask you to do the same. I look forward to hearing from you in response to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Roy', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Cynthia Roy
Educator and Constituent