

Payments to Palmer's charter school based on enrollment figures are scheduled to stop as of July 1.

David Weathington, Palmer Charter School's chief executive and academic officer, said the charter school takes in many of the students that other charter schools don't. He said the school must often personalize service for many students who arrive without proper documentation about their history. Weathington refuted the district's enrollment numbers for special education students, saying it was 20 percent, not 12 percent.

Weathington said the school must work toward providing students with support they need before making greater strides in learning.

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Philadelphia Tribune

"Charter school founder prepares for legal battle"

By Shamlin Wilford III

Headnote

Walter Palmer seeks to stop revocation, suspension process from school district

Walter Palmer said he considers the school district's attempt to initiate revocation proceedings against the North Philadelphia school he founded retribution for challenging its authority to cap enrollment. The founder of Walter D. Palmer Leadership Partners Charter School has hired an attorney to take on the school district in court - again.

"The revocation and suspension process should be stopped until the bigger picture legal issues are worked out," said Matthew Haverstick, a Philadelphia attorney specializing in white collar crime.

"We're waiting for a response from the court."

Haverstick has filed legal briefs challenging the School Reform Commission's authority to disregard procedures established by charter school law. The commission that oversees Philadelphia's public schools has invoked legislation responsible for its creation to exempt itself, temporarily, from charter school regulations.

The school district has asked the state's highest court to validate its decision to suspend charter rules. However, there's no word on when that will happen.

Outraged by what they consider lack of due process, parents aren't sitting idle either. Dozens of parents have signed an online petition in a show of support for their child's school. And, school staff are making robo-calls to parents to ease parents' fears and manage public perception about the school.

Councilman Curtis Jones and Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, co-chair of the Education Committee, and Veronica Joyner, chief administrator of Mathematics, Civics and Sciences Charter School, are among supporters rallying behind the man who founded **Walter Palmer** Leadership Partners Charter School.

The school district announced proceedings against the charter school based on sub-par academic performances over a six year period and for exceeding enrollment limits approved by the school district. Just days earlier, a court had ruled in favor of a civil suit challenging the School District of Philadelphia's authority to cap enrollment.

Palmer has stated the school district had overstepped its boundaries in trying to limit enrollment growth. He has repeatedly pledged to fight the charges.

School officials also accused the charter school with falsifying enrollment figures in order to obtain more enrollment-based school aid than it was entitled. **Palmer** countered the allegations, saying the school district is trying to create the illusion of mismanagement or misappropriation of funds by the charter school administration.

David Weathington, chief executive and administrative/academic officer, said several new initiatives are aimed at keeping students safe while traveling to and from school and during school hours.

"Additionally, we have implemented a strong academic support program that includes strong instructional strategies in the classroom, individualized learning for each student, and supplemental supports," Weathington said in a letter posted on the school's website.

Joyner sent two letters expressing support for **Palmer** and raised questions whether the district acted prematurely against a fellow charter school provider who she considers a friend. The correspondence was sent to SRC Chairman Bill Green and the district's office charged with oversight of more than 80 charter schools.

In an April 28 letter addressed to the Charter School Office, Joyner wrote, "Precedent dictates that a corrective action plan be developed and implemented before closing a school. Was a corrective action plan given to Mr. Palmer? I do not believe Mr. Palmer was given due process within the spirit of the law."

Palmer has stated publicly his charter school never attempted to infringe, impinge or deny education funding to the school district by falsifying enrollment records for reimbursement purposes. He took up the issue with the SRC but the panel voted to move forward with a June 2 revocation hearing against his charter school.

He later appeared before the City Council's Committee of the Whole as it heard from the public on the school district's budget. "I will never resist the chance to fight what, I think, is injustice," the 80-year-old charter school founder said.

"Everybody has a right to due process, and we look forward to you getting your opportunity," Blackwell replied.

Sidebar

Walter Palmer stands outside the namesake charter school he founded in North Philadelphia. He has hired an attorney to fight the school district's attempt to revoke the school's charter, a move he considers retaliatory in nature.

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"District changes direction in attempt to shut charter"

Wilford Shamlin, III

In a move intended to avoid a challenge to its authority to suspend a charter school, the School District of Philadelphia on Friday announced it would lift the suspension against Walter D. Palmer Leadership Partners Charter School in North Philadelphia.

However, school officials still intends to move forward with charter revocation process approved by the School Reform Commission (SRC) on April 24.