

The school district said letters notifying parents about its latest announcement and outlining next steps.

Palmer charter school operates the Lower School at 910 N. Sixth St. for students in prekindergarten through fourth grade and the Upper School for grades 5 to 12 at 5500 Harbison Ave.

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**Philadelphia Tribune**

"Charter supporters rally to save school"

Wilford Shamlin III

Walter D. Palmer Learning Partners Charter School celebrated its high school senior class, which has a 100 percent graduation rate, and school choice during a rally Thursday on the school's main campus.

Hundreds of students showed support for the charter school, named after its founder, carrying signs with messages critical of the state Supreme Court ruling on Wednesday upholding enrollment caps.

"Save our school! Save our school!"-students chanted loudly at the entrance to the school at 910 N. 6th St. From an elevated position, Fajr Mitchell, a ninth-grade student who had climbed onto a retainer wall. "No justice, no peace," the 15-year-old shouted.

His classmates displayed signs with short messages: "Shame on the Supreme Court," "Where is due process," and "Our parents chose this school."

Supporters of the charter school charge the School Reform Commission (SRC), which oversees Philadelphia's public school system, with failing to give the charter school due process before moving to strip the school's charter.

Khalilah Mustafaa has four children enrolled at the charter school. The South Philadelphia mother said she's happy with the school climate in comparison to another school, which is district-managed.

"It's very family oriented," said Mustafaa, who liked the school programming offered at the charter school.

School leaders say many of the students enrolled come from 17 of the poorest ZIP codes in the city. Supporters say closing the school will hurt families. A petition drive in support of keeping the doors open has nearly 1,000 signatures. The petition demonstrates the school's value in the community, a spokeswoman for the charter school said.

School District of Philadelphia officials hailed Wednesday's state Supreme Court decision as a victory, saying the district should not be legally mandated to pay the charter school for student enrollment above the limit agreed upon in the school's charter.

The school district is consulting with its general counsel Michael Davis on an effective legal strategy for recovering \$1.3 million in payments made to the charter school.

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania concluded that an enrollment cap stands valid if an agreement is reached as part of a written charter, according to a copy of an 11-page decision issued Wednesday by Chief Justice Ronald Castille.

"The school district, the School Reform Commission, and I, are all very pleased with this result," Davis said. "It really does confirm what we've been saying since 2010 when the **Walter Palmer** Charter School entered into an agreement with the school district and signed an agreement to cap enrollment at 675 students."

School officials could also seek enforcement of the state's top court through a lower Commonwealth Court or bring the issue before the state Department of Education, the administrative agency that decided on the matter of enrollment caps, Davis said.

**Palmer**, who founded the school, and his attorney had argued the SRC has no authority, based on state law, to cap enrollment.

"I believe the Supreme Court really made a mistake. If they make a ruling on law, we will win. I believe it was a political decision," said **Palmer**.

In Wednesday's decision, the state's top court ruled the charter school's argument lacks merit in light of a signed charter agreement.

The charter school had agreed to limit enrollment to 675 pupils but admitted as many as 765 pupils during two consecutive academic years. In a phone interview, **Palmer** contends school staff signed

the agreement under duress rather than run the risk of restrictions that could affect the school's operation.

The next step in the escalating feud is a June 2 revocation hearing. Palmer and his attorney are gathering data and evidence in support of keeping the charter school open.

In addition to the main campus, Palmer Learning Partners Charter School runs a second campus at 5502 Harbison Ave. About 1,300 students are enrolled at the charter school.

The school has enlisted the support of organizers of an annual Lock Conference, which promotes beauty and natural hair products. Palmer charter school has hosted the event for the last five years.

"Everyone who attends enjoys themselves and greatly appreciates the school," a flier read, in part. "Now, the students, parents, teachers, and school administrators need our help. Let the Philadelphia School District know we want Walter Palmer Learning Partners Charter School to stay open."

**July 8, 2014**

**Philadelphia Magazine**

"No, an Uzi Was *Not* Found at a Philadelphia Charter School"

by VICTOR FIORILLA

On Monday, according to police, the assistant dean at the Walter D. Palmer Leadership Partners Charter School on Harbison Avenue in the Frankford section of Philadelphia found a loaded gun inside a locker during renovations.

CBS Philly quickly reported that the gun was an Uzi, and people really freak out about Uzis. But it turns out it was just a 9mm handgun from MasterPiece Arms, like the one seen here.

The School District isn't answering any questions about the gun, since Walter D. Palmer is a charter school. And as for the school itself, they hung up on me when I called to get a comment. But rest assured, parents: It was *not* an Uzi.

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**Age of Justice**

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