



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

Public Hearing:

**The Proposed Co-location of a New Public Elementary Charter School,
Success Academy Charter School – New York 1 (84MTBD), with Existing Schools
The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management (02M135) and
Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers (02M520) in Building M520
Beginning in the 2014-2015 School Year**

Testimony by

Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson

and

Tricia Joyce, Youth and Education Committee, Chairperson

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

Building M520 – 411 Pearl Street

6:00 PM

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal, that serves to directly impact the safety and education of our students.

At our full board meeting on September 24, 2013, CB1 passed unanimously a resolution in support of Community Education Council District Two's resolution calling for the withdrawal of the proposal to co-locate Success Academy Charter School, New York 1 within Building M520, the current site of Murry Bergtraum High School.

CB1 is very concerned about the proposed co-location. The proposal for an additional Charter School within our community is completely at odds with the current needs of our community. Schools in CB1 have faced chronic overcrowding and resulting waitlists over the past six years in our zoned elementary schools forcing them to enlarge class sizes and repurpose classrooms to meet the rising demand. As a result, our schools are overcrowded and our students lack the level of attention and resources they deserve and need.

The Department of Education (DOE) has recently promised to include 1,000 school seats in Lower Manhattan in its next 5-year Capital Plan. While we have been assured that the proposed 450 Charter school seats for the Success Academy will not be considered to be part of these 1,000 new elementary school seats, we believe DOE resources should be dedicated to expeditiously carrying out this promise first and foremost. The siting of an additional charter school within our district is not responsive to parents in our community who have repeatedly called for additional zoned schools.

CB1 is also concerned about the safety of elementary students who would attend Success Academy if this plan is approved. We are, unfortunately, all too familiar with safety issues at Murry Bergtraum High School due to a series of incidents that have taken place in recent years in and around the school. These incidents have continued this year and in fact several have taken place in recent days. On Monday, three arrests associated with Murry Bergtraum students were

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made, including a student and two friends or relatives. Defusing incidents such as these have caused a drain on limited police resources in addition to compromised safety on the surrounding streets.

The safety of all students is of the utmost importance to us and we find it inappropriate to place young students in the same facility as any high school let alone one defined by New York Police Department records as an “impact school.” Despite this designation, the school has no metal detector and as recently as this past Friday, school security arrested a student there for criminal possession of a weapon (an over 6” knife and metal pipe).

Additionally, CB1 is concerned that the building utilization plan under consideration has not been vetted. This proposal has been handled in a hurried manner and we believe that access to shared facilities – gym, lunchroom, auditorium, and staircases, to name a few – would be inadequate for all the students in Building M250.

DOE has proposed to relocate the Stephan T. Malter Building Arts & Craftsman High School after one just year in Building M250, due to insufficient facilities for their curriculum. This relocation after one year could have been prevented had the DOE taken the appropriate amount of time to properly vet both the needs of this school as well as its potential match with the facilities offered at M250. In its place, DOE proposes to site both The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management and the Success Academy Charter School for the 2014-2015 school year. Given DOE’s track record of rushing co-locations, we are very skeptical about the agency’s ability to site two schools in the same year and do not believe it would best serve the educational needs of any of the students.

It is also noteworthy that the co-location proposal was released prior to the charter application for Success Academy Charter being approved, which is inconsistent with due process. Finally, CB1 passed a resolution on February 22, 2011 opposing the co-location of charter schools in public schools altogether.

In light of the dramatic need for more properly funded locally zoned schools and the concerns about security and the shared facilities that have yet to be addressed and answered, CB1 recommends that the DOE expeditiously withdraws this proposed siting prior to the upcoming Panel for Education Policy hearing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.