

C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER

April 10, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Ave., SW Washington, DC 20202

RE: Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary DeVos,

I am pleased to express my support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funding. Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve approximately 22,000 students. Some of our public charter schools post the highest scores on the Idaho Standards Achievement Test and the College Board's SAT.

Bluum, a nonprofit statewide charter school support organization, leads a consortium of public and nonprofit Idaho partners. Consortium members include the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the nonprofit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The grant would enable Idaho to:

- Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for under-served populations and rural students through start-up, replication and expansion.
- Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to share best practices with the rest of Idaho's education system.
- Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can help communities start and expand charter schools.

My office is excited about working with the consortium to support Idaho's charter schools as we seek to improve student success and achievement. We look forward to better serving Idaho's children and families though this grant opportunity. Thank you for your positive consideration.

As Always – Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

C.L. "Butch" Otter Governor of Idaho SCOTT C. BEDKE

DISTRICT 27

CASSIA & MINIDOKA COUNTIES



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STATE CAPITOL P.O. BOX 83720 BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0038 (208) 332-1111

House of Representatives State of Idaho

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

April 17, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of these are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on state ISAT achievement tests in both English language arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.

Idaho is the nation's fastest growing state, and Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.

- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state. I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Scott Bedke

Speaker of the House

Scott Bedhe

Home Address: 1010 South 2nd East Rexburg, Idaho 83440 (208) 356-7495 E-mail: bhill@senate.idaho.gov



Office Address: State Capitol P.O. Box 83720 Boise, Idaho 83720-0081 (208) 332-1300

April 16, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Idaho's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity, Bluum, is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's many partners come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors, the most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group, Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

Idaho's public charter schools serve about 22,000 students. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Our charter school students show exceptional academic growth across the board, including economically disadvantaged and minority students.

Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They see them working for children across the state.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program funds. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Brent Hill





HOME ADDRESS 425 SOUTH 1100 WEST PINGREE, IDAHO 83262 (208) 684-4052 (208) 681-4052

EMAIL: jvanorden@house.idaho.gov

House of Representatives State of Idaho

April 17, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead a consortium of state partners. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on state ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.

- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Rep. Julie Van Ocah

Representative Julie VanOrden

Chairwoman, Idaho State House of Representatives Education Committee



Co-Chairman, Senate Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caugus

CO-CHAIRMAN, WESTERN WATER CAUCUS

CO-CHAIRMAN, SWEETENER CAUCUS

Co-Chairman, COPD Caucus

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2018

BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN FINANCE

COMMITTEES

JUDICIARY

INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Honorable Betsy DeVos U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

I am writing in support of the Bluum Organization's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funding. I am told that Bluum, a non-profit statewide charter school support entity is prepared to lead a consortium of state partners including those in the public and non-profit sectors. The Idaho Consortium includes the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, a finance group called Building Hope, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

As the nation's fastest growing state, this grant would allow Bluum to increase the number of quality charter school seats, particularly in rural and educationally disadvantaged areas throughout Idaho. Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve approximately 22,000 students statewide. Statistically speaking, Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than peers in traditional district schools including higher test results on state ISAT achievement and SAT exams.

Idahoans value public charter schools, and the Idaho Consortium hopes to become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and non-profit sectors can help communities start and expand charter schools. I understand that all stakeholders in Bluum realize the significance of this grant and the great benefits it would give to Idaho's students. The future of our state depends on the quality of the education we offer and we are committed to improving our charter school system.

I urge the U.S. Department of Education to give this application all due consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Crapo United States Senator

MIKE SIMPSON

SECOND DISTRICT, IDAHO

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEES:

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES CHAIRMAN

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

April 2, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I write to express my support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. I have long supported strong schools through my work as a member of the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee, and am proud to support the work represented by this application.

Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Stakeholders across the Gem State have worked together to foster innovation and the development of charter schools and the dissemination of charter school best practices from our study of successful schools across the country. Our participation in this opportunity through the Charter School Program is in alignment with these goals and will help us improve Idaho's charter schools.

Idaho's CSP grant is a critical component of our ongoing work to expand the educational opportunities available to students and families across the great state of Idaho. Participation in CSP will also support the continued development of authorizers like the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, in partnership with public and private partners throughout the state.

I urge you to support Idaho's ongoing work to build a charter school community by giving this application your full consideration. With this, the creation, implementation and replication of Idaho charter schools will continue to increase the opportunities available to Idaho families and effectively prepare our students for success in life, college and career. Thank you for considering this application.

Sincerely.

Mike Simpson

Member of Congress

RAUL R. LABRADOR

FIRST DISTRICT, IDAHO

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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 13, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

I write in support of Bluum's application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding. Bluum is a statewide nonprofit charter school support organization designed to lead a consortium of state partners to improve educational opportunities in Idaho. This grant, if funded, would support Bluum's mission to ensure Idaho's children reach their fullest potential by cultivating great leaders and innovative schools. Specifically, Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding would support the key objectives of Idaho's *Communities of Excellence* proposal.

These objectives include:

- Increasing the number of quality charter school seats by 8,200 students, especially for the most educationally disadvantaged.
- Supporting the Idaho Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts, while disseminating and supporting best practices statewide.
- Evaluating and reporting the success and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- Becoming a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can leverage expertise to help communities run charter schools.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. This grant is a critical component to the ongoing work to expand the educational opportunities available to students and families across Idaho. I urge you to give this application all due consideration.

Sincerely,

Rail R. Habrodon

Raúl Labrador Member of Congress

LEWISTON OFFICE: 313 D STREET, SUITE 107 LEWISTON, ID 83501 (208) 743–1388 FAX: (208) 743–0247



500 West Washington Street Boise, Idaho 83702 (208) 342-2688 Fax (208) 342-8585

April 18, 2018

The Honorable Besty DeVos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Idaho's 2018 CSP Application

Dear Secretary DeVos,

On behalf of the more than 78,000 member-families of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, I want to express our support for Idaho's application to the U.S. Department of Education for participation in the 2018 "Expanding Opportunities through Quality Charter Schools – Grants to State Entities" (CSP) Program.

The Farm Bureau has been a long-time supporter of strong and robust school systems which offer a quality education to all the state's children and youth. We have a particular interest in rural areas of the state having access to similar resources and opportunities as those schools located in more urban or developed areas. Charter schools offer more options for students and increase educational opportunities for Idaho's rural communities.

Charter schools provide parents and students additional options and experiences to achieve their goals and interests. In many parts of the state, charter schools offer education and curriculums with tailored focuses such as STEM education, the arts, experimental learning, and other areas. These focused curriculums aid students as they prepare for future endeavors and careers.

Idaho Farm Bureau policy supports charter schools as part of the state's broader education system. This diverse school system will provide parents and students the opportunity to choose education venues and options that will best serve the individual and their interest. Additionally, this investment will pay positive dividends to both the state and local communities in a variety of aspects.

On behalf of the entire membership at the Idaho Farm Bureau, I thank you for your consideration of these comments. We urge your support of Idaho's application to continue to expand and build Idaho's charter schools system.

Sincerely,

Bryan Searle, President

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation



105 W. Adams St. Suite 1900 Chicago, IL 60603

April 17, 2018

Office of Innovation and Improvement U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) is pleased to offer its support for Idaho's Charter School Program (CSP) grant proposal. NACSA works to provide more children with an opportunity to attend a good school by strengthening charter school authorizing. We are delighted that the Idaho CSP proposal devotes attention to improving authorizing.

NACSA is a non-profit, professional membership association with broad and deep experience working with our nation's authorizers. Our work includes evaluation, training, and development of authorizing tools and processes, all informed by research on and experience with the best authorizers in the country.

We look forward to supporting Idaho's efforts to provide more students with a great education through more good charter schools and better authorizing.

Sincerely,

Greg Richmond

Lag Rid of



IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

304 North 8th Street, Room 242 • P.O. Box 83720 • Boise, ID 83720-037 208-332-**1561 • Fax: 208**-334-2632 e-mail:charter@osbe.idaho.gov

March 30, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Room 4W257 Washington, DC 20202–5970

Re: Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As Chairman of the Idaho Public Charter Commission (IPCSC), I value this opportunity to express my support for Bluum's application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding.

The IPCSC is Idaho's statewide, independent authorizer. We presently authorize 73% of Idaho's 56 charters and are proud of the exceptional service that many of these schools provide to nearly 17,000 students. Since 2004, the IPCSC has approved charters for a diverse array of schools. Our portfolio ranges from STEM schools in rural areas to Native American language immersion in a tribal community, and from college preparatory academies to virtual alternative schools. We continually seek to implement nationally-identified best practices in authorizing, upholding our mission to ensure the provision of high quality charter school opportunities across our state.

Enrollment waiting list data informs us that many more Idaho families would like to benefit from the educational options that public charter schools provide. Unfortunately, many, otherwise-capable petitioning groups are unable to secure the resources necessary to propose a viable financial plan. The CSP grant offers an exciting avenue to reinvigorate Idaho's charter school sector, enabling both new petitioners and existing schools to bring their education dreams into reality.

We appreciate and support the proposed Idaho consortium led by Bluum, which would enable many public and nonprofit entities to combine resources and broaden our services. The CSP grant would provide the IPCSC with invaluable resources to grow and streamline our work, focus on encouraging increased diversity of student populations in charters, and ultimately continue to perform as an authorizer on the leading edge of quality in the school choice community.

I respectfully urge your support of Idaho's public charter schools, and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Alan Weed

Alan Reed, IPCSC Chairman



IDAHO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

650 W. State Street | P.O. Box 83720 | Boise, Idaho 83720-0037 208-334-2270 | FAX: 208-334-2632 email: board@osbe.idaho.gov

April 10, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos Secretary of Education U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, DC 20202

Re: Support for Idaho's Application for the Charter School Program 'Awards to State Entities' Program

Dear Madam Secretary,

On behalf of the Idaho State Board of Education, it is my pleasure to write in support of Idaho's application for the Expanding Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP) Grants to State Entities program.

The Idaho State Board of Education (ISBE) has constitutional and statutory responsibility for providing general oversight and governance over all state colleges and universities (including community colleges), the public school system (traditional and charter), and five education-related agencies. ISBE is designated as the State Educational Agency per Idaho Code §33-110. The Idaho Public Charter School Commission (PCSC), also under the aegis of ISBE, is the state's largest authorizer, with a portfolio comprising 73% of Idaho's 56 charters (~16,800 students). The PCSC implements best practices and holds its schools accountable (academically and financially) to ensure public charter schools are high quality options for Idaho families.

Between July 2016 and July 2017, Idaho was the nation's fastest-growing state; and demand for school choice options continues to grow throughout the state. However, new charter schools face significant financial challenges, especially related to start-up costs, facilities and transportation. The CSP grant would provide financial support needed to help new or expanding schools with these initial operational costs. Idaho's CSP grant application also contemplates Bluum (an Idaho-based charter school support organization) partnering with the PCSC (as a subgrantee) to support and strengthen the work of the commission. Specifically, technical assistance funding would provide PCSC with the capacity and resources needed to review petitions for significant planned expansion (8,200 new seats) of new quality charters under the grant.

Idaho is a predominately rural and massively geographically diverse state. In 2015, Idaho ranked ninth in the country for workers earning minimum wage or less. Idaho has a growing Hispanic population which, as of 2014, makes up approximately 12% (or 200,000) of the state's total 1.6M population. Unfortunately, each of these subpopulations (i.e. rural, low socioeconomic status, Hispanic) are disproportionally underrepresented in the state's charter schools. A key objective of this grant is to expand high quality school choice options to these communities of interest.

When charter schools first started in Idaho 20 years ago, in addition to offering school choice they were considered laboratories for innovation. The intent was for best practices to be shared out to traditional public schools. Unfortunately, charters schools in Idaho have proven to be largely silos unto themselves. Therefore, this grant appropriately seeks to share widely the successes of charter schools for the good of the entire public education system.

I believe Idaho students and public schools would benefit from the objectives of this grant proposal, and I respectfully request your support of Idaho's CSP application.

Sincerely,

Matt Freeman

Executive Director

J.A. and KATHRYN ALBERTSON FAMILY FOUNDATION

March 29, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funding. My name is Roger Quarles, I am the Executive Director of the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation. Our Foundation has supported Idaho's public charter schools since the beginning of the charter movement in Idaho in the late 1990s and have remained very active to this day. We have invested millions of dollars to help grow our state's strong and high-performing charter school sector.

We believe innovation and school choice are the drivers to real academic improvement. As a Foundation, we are committed to providing high-quality options for students and families across the Gem State. We would greatly value a partnership with the USDOE. The time is right for Idaho. We are the fastest growing state in the country, and keeping up with the rate of an increasing and diversifying student population with our current resources, will continue to be a challenge. The resources from this grant can create some real opportunities for Idaho children.

We support Bluum in seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more options because of how charters have provided new opportunities for students across the state. I urge you to support Idaho's application for CSP funding. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Roger Quarles, PhD Executive Director



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am writing on behalf of Building Hope, a national nonprofit organization that supports charter school facilities development expressing my unconditional support of BLUUM, the Idaho education reform organization, that is leading a consortium of partners submitting a proposal to secure grant funds in the Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding from the United States Department of Education competition.

As a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution that seeks to equalize access to a quality K-12 education and increase high school graduation rates so that all children have a fair chance at the "American Dream". We do this by helping charter schools find affordable facilities solutions that enable the schools to do what they do best: help children learn. In our work Idaho, BLUUM has been an unfailing partner that together have produced tangible results for Idaho students and families. The success stories include the expansion of SAGE International Schools and their consolidation into a unified campus, the renovation of an underutilized former high school building in Idaho Falls into a cutting-edge school, the expansion of Vision Charter School in rural Caldwell, and the development of Idaho's first homegrown charter management organization, GEM Innovation Schools, to name a few.

BLUUM and the consortium seek support through this grant to: (i) increase the number of quality charter school capacity by adding 8,200 seats for the most educationally disadvantaged and rural students through start-up, replication and expansion, (ii) provide added support to the Idaho Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while disseminating and supporting best practices for other authorizers throughout the State of Idaho, (iii) evaluate and widely report the successes and lessons of the impact of charter school to the broader education system, and (iv) be a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can leverage their expertise to help communities start, expand and improve charter schools.

Idaho is a leader in developing established public-private partnerships such as this consortium with BLUUM, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the Idaho State Board of Education, Idaho Charter School Network, individual charter school operations and governing boards and established philanthropic organizations like the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation.

Thank you for your consideration of this consortium's application.

Sincerely,

S. Joseph Bruno

President

Building Hope, A Charter School Facilities Fund



April 9, 2018

Director Stefan Huh Charter Schools Program U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202-5970

Dear Mr. Huh:

On behalf of the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools ("NCSECS"), I am writing to express our support for the Idaho Department of Education (the "Department") and its application for U.S. Department of Education Charter School Program ("CSP") grant funds.

The mission of NCSECS is to ensure that students with disabilities are able to fully access and thrive in charter schools. We are a national not-for-profit organization devoted to addressing the practical, policy, and regulatory challenges that can impede access and equity for students with disabilities in the charter sector. Within our narrow area of focus our work is broad; it ranges from establishing facts and disseminating research, to authoring papers on best practices for schools and charter school authorizers, to advising on state and federal legislation and regulations, to providing targeted technical assistance. With regard to the latter, over the past four years, NCSECS has assisted numerous stakeholders. This includes advising authorizers in Nevada, Tennessee, Colorado, and Louisiana on best practices for special education in authorizing and overseeing charter schools, as well as providing multiple layers of support for the charter schools in many other states. Our support extends to instruction, operations, compliance, finances, staffing, and professional development. Notably, we are assisting several states and districts in developing a centralized special education resource / collaborative that can serve all the charter schools in their area.

NCSECS is enthusiastic about supporting Idaho's charter school community through the substantive, creative work for which it is seeking CSP funding. If the state's proposal is approved, we will partner with the Idaho Department of Education as it seeks to cultivate strong and innovative, equitable structures for charter schools in the state. This may include providing an analysis of factors impacting equitable access to charter schools and the academic success of their students with disabilities; a roster of targeted professional development offerings; tools for schools and authorizers that are tailored to state requirements and needs; support for authorizers in overseeing special education at charter schools; and assistance with building a special education collaborative.

The Idaho Department of Education is demonstrating a clear understanding of the needs of students with disabilities in charter schools and its initiatives promise to provide results that can be measured and replicated within the state and across the country.



Mr. Stefan Huh April 9, 2018 Page ■

We look forward to helping the state continue the innovative work now developing in the Idaho charter sector and to ensuring that these benefits extend to all children who want to access them.

Sincerely,

Lauren Morando Rhim

Executive Director & Co-founder



Upper Carmen Public Charter School, Inc.

12 Ethel's Way - PO Box 33 - Carmen, ID 83462

Phone: (208) 756 - 4590



Sue Smith, Founder and Principal

Jim Smith, Superintendent

United States Department of Education Charter School Program Grant Idaho's Communities of Excellence proposal

Upper Carmen is a rural charter that has been in existence since 2005, located in a county of only 7000 population. We have been called the "most rural charter school in the lower 48." Approximately 92% of this county is owned by the State and Federal governments.

Idaho was the recipient of a Charter School Program Grant when we started, and without that Federal support. Upper Carmen would not have been able to start, given the parameters we had set for ourselves. First among those was giving a choice to local parents and students without significantly impacting the loss of students from the traditional school system. The local economy and demographics had been in a constant mode of decline since the mid 1980's.

Starting with low student numbers was not seen as possible by generally accepted wisdom, and would not have been without the Charter School Program Grant.

The most refreshing portion of this grant proposal is that the partners have come together collectively to support a common cause: The expansion of opportunity for quality charter school seats, and the dissemination of best practices. The State Board, the Charter School Commission and the Charter Network all approach these goals from different perspectives, yet know that choice is beneficial to the greater community and to the future well-being of Idaho and the nation. Bringing together bureaucracies who often have strong beliefs about control and how to measure quality is a great step forward for education, and may likely be a model for other states and agencies to follow.

Even though our student numbers are low, and we live in economically depressed area, those students will leave us with a quality educational base. Upper Carmen still remains in the top 10% of schools in Idaho and in the top 20% of rural charter schools nationally. Idaho is made up of communities similar to ours, which also deserve the ability for parents to have a choice in their child's education.

Sac Smith Jim Smith

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Upper Carmen Public Charter School's mission is to develop each student to their greatest potential, academically, socially, and emotionally. Successful students emulate ethics of confidence, productivity, and responsibility.



151 N Ridge Avenue, Idaho Falls, ID 83402 | Office: 208-522-5145 | Fax: 208-522-5147 Office@AlturasAcademy.org | AlturasAcademy.org

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on state ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.

At Alturas International Academy, approximately 35% of our students are considered low income and we serve several rural farming communities in our area. We currently have a list of over 400 children waiting to for a seat in our school.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.



151 N Ridge Avenue, Idaho Falls, ID 83402 | Office: 208-522-5145 | Fax: 208-522-5147 Office@AlturasAcademy.org | AlturasAcademy.org

- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Michelle Ball Executive Director April 13, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202



#### RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I write to express my support for Idaho's application to the U.S. Department of Education for participation in the 2017 "Expanding Opportunities through Quality Charter Schools - Grants To State Entities" Charter School Program (CSP). I have long supported strong schools through my 30+ years of developing and managing individual charter schools, now numbering over 60 in 5 states, helping thousands of students realize their educational goals.

The nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead includes a consortium of state partners. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors including our Pathways in Education school in Nampa.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide including our first school opened last August, with already over 150 students, focused on supporting disadvantaged students in Idaho.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program funding. Thank you for your consideration of Idaho's grant application.

Sincerely,

John Hall President



# **Board of Directors**

Randy Schrader rschrader@elevate2c.org

Sophia Valdez svaldez@elevate2c.org

Kelly Culver kculver@elevate2c.org

Amaia Vicandi-Bow avicandi-bow@elevate2c.org

Kyle Byerly kyle.byerly@rulesteel.com

Kellie Foreman kellie.foreman@hcahealthcare.com

Brad Ward brad@mgcidaho.com

# **Founders**

Matt Strong 208.869.7458 mstrong@elevate2c.org

Monica White 208.407.4963 mwhite@elevate2c.org April 9, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

Hello, my name is Monica White and I am writing this letter in conjunction with Matt Strong. We are the co-founders of Elevate Academy. Elevate Academy will be a premier charter school in Idaho that aims to serve at-risk youth in Canyon County. Elevate Academy will focus on disenfranchised students and provide them the opportunity to earn their education through rigorous Career Technical Education. We are writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Bluum plays a critical role in providing opportunities for students that otherwise would not have choice.

Elevate is a 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade school that is focused on helping students find their passion and career pathway with an emphasis on workforce readiness. During the 6<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> grade years, students will explore career technical pathways and take personal leadership classes to help them understand how to lead and own their educational journey. Students will leave Elevate with 2 Career Technical certifications and Workforce Readiness certification. Elevate has partnered with Lifeway's mental health to offer full time mental wellness component for students in need.

Community, business, and parents are craving innovation and opportunity for their communities and their children. While developing Elevate Academy we have been met with nothing but strong support throughout the Caldwell, Idaho community. The city of Caldwell has been instrumental in helping us to secure land, Industries partners are working to help us develop curriculum that better meets the needs of next generation workers. This support, however, is an acknowledgement that the educational landscape in the state needs to change. The work of Bluum and their partners is the catalyst for that change to occur at a high level in the state of Idaho.

Bluum believes in innovation and choice with a strong foundation of accountability. This work inspires those of us fortunate enough to work with Bluum to think without limits and develop programs the meet the specific needs of the area and the population we aim to serve. In conjunction with innovation Bluum expects and inspires us to develop schools that will be among the top in Idaho.

We value our relationship with Bluum, and we strongly believe that Bluum has the best interest of students and families in the state of Idaho. They will be a great steward of the CSP grant, and they will see to it that the money translates into high quality, innovative intuitions that are good for the students and families of Idaho.

Sincerely

Monica White & Matt Strong

97 Jan Sraw 6

#### "QUALITY SERVICE SINCE 1960"



11299 Bass Lane Caldwell, Idaho 83605 800 769-5636 208 585-3031 Fax 208 585-2506

April 13, 2018

Secretary Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing on behalf of Rule Steel to express my strong support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding. Rule Steel is an industry leader in steel fabrication throughout the state of Idaho. We currently serve a broad customer base within the northwest, as well as globally through our various product lines. We have been a staple in the local community for the past five-plus decades and have grown from a small family run company to a corporation of over 250 employees.

Charter schools are a popular option for Idaho families and students who desire or need a more focused and intimate learning environment. Charters give Idaho students the opportunity to involve themselves in an atmosphere that may not be available anywhere else within the community. Idaho is the fastest growing state in the country, which translates to long waitlists for our existing charter schools. Currently, limited access to funding and facilities makes support of expansion and replication problematic. Starting a charter in Idaho is extremely difficult, due mostly to the low levels of per-pupil funding available to them.

Bluum and the Idaho Consortium of State Partners participation in the CSP program will help new schools to expand facilities and course offerings to better fit the communities in which they serve. CSP funds will help support the growth of high quality schools that ready students for immediate work force contribution or continued education.

Rule Steel and other industry contributors within the community can be a great source of knowledge and expertise to further the relevant education of charter students. Continued involvement by industry leaders can help keep students and educators alike up to speed on ground breaking or cutting-edge advancements in various fields. Creating these types of relationships keep businesses and schools working together to create a more productive community.

Quality charter schools are a vital piece of Idaho's goal to give every student the opportunity to obtain an outstanding, life-changing education.

Your support of Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kyle Byerly

**Engineering Manager** 



1123 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue Rd #319 Nampa, ID 83686 208-608-5022 mcgcidaho.com

April 12, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. As a general contractor in Idaho, my company, Merit, LLC, serves our community in construction and remodeling of homes and commercial buildings. Idaho, being the nation's fastest growing state, is in dire need of skilled laborers as we strive to meet the needs of our citizens. Right now, there is a shortage of qualified skilled employees in the construction field. We are in strong support of charter schools in Idaho – and are especially excited about a start-up specializing in trades for our secondary students. It is an essential need in our state. Charter schools in Idaho are an option which not all families are able to access. Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. The problem is that many of our charter schools with strong track records of accomplishment report lengthy waitlists to potential students and families which they cannot currently serve. The solution is to establish more charters. Starting a charter in Idaho is extremely difficult, in large part due to the low levels of per-pupil funding available which hinder startups with the costs involved in the beginning. As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1) Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most economically disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2) Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality in authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3) Evaluate and report the successes and lessons learned of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4) Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and non-profit sectors can help communities start and expand charter schools.

Goal #4 is especially important to the construction industry in our growing state as skilled laborers, i.e. plumbers, electricians, builders, framers, etc. are of short supply. Being able to start a secondary charter school in our area will help to promote Idaho students who have an interest in the construction industry to become viable future employees.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant opportunity.

Sincerely,

Bradley D. Ward Merit, LLC



April 11, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support: Bluum Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express the strongest possible support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. The application is led by Bluum and its several partners.

Bluum is a nonprofit statewide charter school support entity. Bluum provides thought-leadership, training, and financial support for charter schools across the state of Idaho. I have had the honor and pleasure to travel with the Bluum team from Boise in the Southwest, to Pocatello in the East, and to Coeur d'Alene in the North of Idaho. I have personally observed that when the Bluum team arrives, large crowds of charter school supporters, teachers and administrators turn out to share and learn with and from Bluum.

For the purposes of this proposal Bluum leads a consortium of the most important Idaho charter school stakeholder organizations from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. Key partners include the Idaho State Board of Education, Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story of entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility. Investors (of time and treasure) include not only students, parents and family, teachers and administrators, but also community members with no connection to charter schools but the love of education and the understanding that continuous improvement does not always occur in the context of traditional public schools. I am such a community member. My children attended public school long before charter schools became a viable alternative in Idaho. Notwithstanding that, I count the time and money I invest in Idaho's charter schools as one of my most important accomplishments.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. The state's highest performing public schools (on state ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics, and on SATs) routinely include its charter schools. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.



Idaho is the nation's fastest growing state, and opportunity to imbed charter schools and the charter school culture deep within the growing educational fabric of the state is tremendous. Bluum and its partners see this Grant Proposal as the essential stepping-stone to educational transformation in Idaho. And as a state that is still largely rural, the potential impact on children in outlying areas is uniquely apparent in Idaho.

Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support for the sake of Idaho's children. Bluum and the Consortium will use funding to:

- Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication, expansion and continuous improvement.
- 2. Support the Idaho Public Charter School Commission in expanding and ensuring accountability through its quality authorizing function while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate, report and export the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system, both public and private, urban and rural.
- 4. Become a national model which will demonstrate that a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can help communities start, expand and improve charter school education to the benefit of students everywhere.

I can testify that, as a long-time and very active volunteer in the charter school sector, I have observed first-hand that Idahoans truly value their public charter schools. I have watched as parents and teacher have elected to stand by struggling charter schools (particularly after the financial downturn in 2008) because of the faith that they have in the power of charter schools. Idahoans want more charter school seats because they see charter schools working for children across the state, in both urban and rural areas (and in Idaho, rural areas can be a very long way away from the state's urban centers in both miles and altitude!)

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerel

William J. Kussell, J.D., M.B.A.

Chairperson, Board of Directors Idaho Charter School Network

Chairperson, Board of Directors North Star Public Charter School

cc: Terry Ryan

PO BOX 338 606 SOUTH AVENUE DEARY, IDAHO 83823



FAX: 208.877.1713 OFFICE: 208.877.1513 GEMINNOVATION.ORG

April 6, 2018

Re: Bluum Consortium Charter School Program Grant Funding

Gem Innovation Schools (GIS) is a network of four K-12 college preparatory charter schools across the State of Idaho, which grew out of a need to provide a high-quality learning environment for Idaho students. GIS students represent dramatically underserved populations. For example, approximately 79% of GIS students fall into one or more of the following categories: low income, special education, first-generation college students or minority students. Approximately 54% of GIS students are low income. Our focus is to improve post-secondary preparedness and achievement for all students with significant implications for underserved populations in our schools.

In addition to the personal challenges that many of our students face, our schools have significant challenges with facility acquisitions. The greatest operational challenge we face is finding and financing affordable and adequate facilities for our students.

Despite these challenges, GIS students consistently rank in the 90<sup>th</sup>+ percentile in academic growth in both reading and math on the national NWEA MAP assessments. GIS students consistently outperform other Idaho students on the Idaho Standard Achievement Test (ISAT). Further, GIS Hispanic students outscored the state average by 10 percentage points in ELA and 13 percentage points in math. Additionally, our only school that currently serves high school students, ranks in the top 10 schools in the state each year, based on SAT scores.

Enrollment demand far exceeds capacity. Each year, we are seeing an increasing number of families who desire attendance in our charter schools. In 2018, there were 2.4 applicants for every seat available in GIS classes, as opposed to 1.8 applicants for every seat available during the 2017 enrollment period. On average 97% of Gem Prep students re-enroll for successive years, leaving very few openings for new students to participate in the charter school experience.

As you can see, there exists a simultaneously growing demand for schools like GIS, and barriers to expansion to serve additional students. BLUUM plays a vital role in removing the barriers to serving more students like ours. This grant application is in furtherance of that effort and has my complete support. Please accept this letter as a formal declaration of that support for the Bluum consortium in regard to the Charter School Grant Funding through the US Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Jason Bransford, CEO jansonbransford@geminnovation.org 208-238-1388









**U.S. Department of Education** 

400 Maryland Avenue, SW.

Washington, D.C. 20202

Re: Letter of support for the Bluum Organization

# Dear United States Department of Education,

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our sincere support of the **Bluum** organization who believes in school choice, and are committed as a non-profit organization to ensuring that **Idaho's Children** reach their fullest potential by cultivating great leaders and innovate schools. First please allow me to introduce ourselves.

In 1996 I was asked by National Heritage Academies (Education Development Corporation at that time) to create a facilities solution for their future charter schools that when built would cost half as much as a typical public school facility for the area selected. That was accomplished! Since then the combined experience of our Bouma USA Management team has created solutions for over 200 Charter School facility projects in states from New York to California representing over 8,000,000 square feet of interior space, and over \$900,000,000 in contract value. Each project brought new learned knowledge that helped us become proficient with creating the necessary project solutions real estate, financing, budgeting, programing, design, construction, scheduling, furniture, furnishings, equipment, & technology. From an education standpoint you might say that we have earned our "Charter School Development Master's Degree!" With that being said we still look forward to growing our knowledge with every single new project!

We have learned through our experience that charter schools do not typically receive the appropriate funding, and that it takes very special talent, experience, and passion to create these affordable, and educational effective solutions. In light of this we are very thankful for the **Bluum** organization who has collectively, with their partners demonstrated that they can fill this gap by creating solutions that work, as their results have demonstrated for many schools in the State of Idaho. Their purpose is clear to support parents, local educators, and communities with the resources and technical assistance necessary to translate their can-do spirit into the top-notch charter schools they crave. We certainly admire their goals which are to 1) Increase the number of quality school seats for students, especially for the most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion; 2) support quality authorizing efforts while disseminating and supporting best practices for other authorizers statewide; 3) evaluate and report widely the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system; and 4) become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can leverage their expertise to help communities start, expand and improve charter schools.

I thank you for reading this letter of support for the **Bluum** organization. If I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me on my mobile phone at 616-485-4434, or email me at dougbouma@bouma@boumausa.com.

Sincerely.

Doug Bouma - President

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead a consortium of state partners. Bluum has a number of partners. These partners come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on state ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.

Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state. According to a recent study conducted in Idaho by FDR Group: "Among respondents with a charter school in their area, 58% think charters outperform the regular public schools – only 23% give the nod to the regular public schools. If money were not an issue, 73% of Idaho's parents would prefer that their child attend a private or charter school, while only 26% would opt for the regular public schools."

I strongly urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars, especially since Idaho is one of the fastest growing states in the union. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely, Sonda Baines

Ronda Baines

**Founding Board President** 

Treasure Valley Classical Academy



April 9, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Bluum, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity, is prepared and committed to lead a consortium of state partners. Our partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on state ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.

- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Toby Prehn

Chairman of the Board

Bluum



March 29, 2018

U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, D.C. 20202 Re: Idaho Application for Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary DeVos:

I am writing on behalf of **NewSchools Venture Fund (NewSchools)** to express my strong support for Idaho's application for Charter School Program Grant Funding.

NewSchools is a national nonprofit that supports and invests in promising, innovative entrepreneurs and teams of educators. We help them accomplish their missions to achieve outstanding results for the schools, students and educators they serve. We invest in new and redesigned schools all over the country, in districts and charter networks. These schools are implementing new approaches to ensure students' learning experiences are more personalized – tailored to their individual needs, skill levels, and interests. Students are empowered to take more ownership of their learning and given opportunities to build deep connections to each other and their teachers.

In the last three years, we have provided grants to two non-profit charter school networks in Idaho:

- GEM Innovation Schools: we supported their replication of a new campus GEM Prep in Nampa that launched in Fall 2016
- Future Public Schools: we are supporting their first school, which is projected to launch in 2018

We are excited about the new ideas and models that these networks, and others like them, are bringing to the Idaho education sector. The growing charter sector in Idaho offers students and families new options that appeal to their needs and interests: STEM, blended instruction, arts focus, project-based learning, etc.

However, charter networks that want to launch new schools in Idaho face a common challenge: startup funding and adequate facilities are limited. While philanthropic investments like ours cover part of this need, Idaho's participation in the CSP program would address the gap that still exists. Your support of Idaho's CSP application would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Stacey Childress

Chief Executive Officer



April 3, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I write to express my support for Idaho's application to the U.S. Department of Education for participation in the "Expanding Opportunities through Quality Charter Schools - Grants To State Entities" (CSP) Program. I am the administrator of a successful Idaho charter school that has benefited from Bluum's advocacy of high quality schools, and am proud to support the work represented by this application.

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead a consortium of state partners. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on state ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics are perennially charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional district schools, and this is true of all students, economically disadvantaged students and minority students.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.



4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Conceived in 2005 as a K-7 school with 247 students, Compass added a grade each year, growing with our oldest group of students who graduated in 2011.

In 2015-16, with Bluum's support, Compass acquired a second location and expanded to include 200 new students K-7 and 21 new teachers across two locations. Even with this large expansion, Compass continues to receive 700+ applicants annually with parents of children in all grade levels being drawn to our focus on academic excellence, a concurrent college credit program, community service, and apprenticeships.

Compass Public Charter School intends to implement additional growth that will almost double our enrollment when we reach full capacity in order to serve the 700+ new applicants we receive each year.

As is the case for the Idaho Consortium including Bluum, the Compass Leadership Team and Board of Directors are driven by the same sense of moral obligation to serve the students who desire a Compass Model education. With the completion of our full expansion, we will graduate more college-ready and college-admitted students per year.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Kelly Trudeau

Compass Charter School Administrator



April 12, 2018

Secretary Betsy DeVos U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, D.C. 20202

Re: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary DeVos,

I am pleased to express enthusiastic support for Bluum's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. The Charter School Program Award will provide Idaho the opportunity to continue to close the achievement gap and create college ready scholars and future community leaders.

As a long-time follower of the education landscape in Idaho, the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF) has seen firsthand that charters offer Idaho students and families options they cannot find elsewhere within their communities. As an investor in the nation's highest performing charter school operators, it is our mission to dramatically expand charter schools' impact on underserved students and we are confident in Idaho's ability to expand and provide high-quality options for students and families.

CSGF makes very select investments in charter school management organizations that deliver outstanding academic results, while achieving sustainability on public revenues. Despite Idaho's growth, many charter schools with strong track records of accomplishment report lengthy waitlists of potential students and families they cannot currently serve. Additionally, there is limited access to equitable funding and facilities, which inhibits expansion and replication. These multiple barriers present obstacles to student success. The Charter School Program would enable charters to start up, replicate and expand high-quality charter schools across Idaho.

We share Idaho's vision that the straightest way to stronger and brighter future for our nation is to invest in quality education, the very best teachers and school leaders who in turn create high performing students and future leaders. CSP funds this grant will provide are essential to the continued growth and expansion of high quality school options for Idaho's students and their families. I fully support Bluum's application for expanding the opportunity proposal for expansion to create more opportunities for us to work together to close achievement gaps.

Thank you. Your support of Bluum's CSP application is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

**Kevin Hall** 

Kniffen

President and CEO, Charter School Growth Fund



April 5, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application (Idaho) for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos:

I am writing to express my support for Idaho's application to the U.S. Department of Education for participation in the 20I7 "Expanding Opportunities through Quality Charter Schools - Grants To State Entities" (CSP) Program.

I am the Executive Director of Sage International School of Boise, a K-12th public charter school in Boise, Idaho. Sage International offers students the globally renowned International Baccalaureate curriculum. Sage International opened its doors eight years ago with 227 K-7th students and has grown to over 1,000 K-12th students while retaining a 500-student wait list. Our students are thriving, including consistently scoring in the top 5% of all Idaho students on the SATs each year. We are achieving and sustaining our academic successes while having grown our FRL population from 17% to 27% over the past three years. We aim to be 'IB for ALL' and to welcome and serve all students.

From my perspective, the success of this grant application is critical to the future health and growth of Idaho's charter school sector for several reasons, as follows.

First, when Sage International opened its doors eight years ago, we received significant federal start-up grant support; absent this support, we could not have launched our successful, thriving school. For the past several years, this (or any other) federal support has not been available in Idaho. This makes it exceedingly difficult, arguably impossible, to successfully launch and foster new charter schools in Idaho absent foundational support. Based on my personal experience of having spent the past ten years serving as a founding board member, Development Director, and now Executive Director of an Idaho charter school, I would not attempt to launch another charter school absent financial support beyond that provided by the Sate of Idaho (49th in the nation in per student funding). I know others in similar positions feel the same; this federal support would alter this dynamic and encourage innovative, successful charter school leaders to grow, replicate and to bring school choice to more students and families.

Second, Bluum, together with the consortium members, is the best-suited entity in Idaho to successfully oversee this grant award. Bluum is an experienced, sophisticated, state-wide

supporter of Idaho charter schools, including having overseen the JA and Kathryn Albertson Foundation's charter school grant award program for many years (nearly \$13,000,000 awarded to create nearly 6,000 new charter seats). The consortium of supporters Bluum has compiled with respect to the CSP grant further adds to their expertise and capacity. I also appreciate Bluum's focus on adding charter school seats that serve low income, high minority families, a goal closely aligned with the CSP grant goals. I also feel uniquely qualified to comment on the strength of the broader consortium joining Bluum in this grant request. In my role as Executive Director of Sage International, I sought and obtained grant support from Bluum and the Albertson Foundation to expand Sage International from 600 to 1,000 students. I worked closely with Building Hope as they financed the purchase and remodel of our 8-acre, 96,000 SF campus. I have also worked closely with the Idaho Charter School Commission, Sage International's authorizer, over the past eight years. In my experience, each of these consortium members is focussed on supporting and growing high-quality schools in Idaho. Each member is highly sophisticated and each member carefully conducts its due diligence with respect to academic strength, financial stability, and leadership /governance capacity when allocating funds and/or when reviewing a school's performance. In short, this is the right team, with the right leader (Bluum), to have the largest impact throughout Idaho if awarded the CSP grant.

Finally, there are already thousands to students on waitlists at Idaho charter schools; coupled with the fact that Idaho's population is the fastest growing in the country. This means that demand for seats at high performing charter schools will only grow for the foreseeable future. There is a strong need for these federal funds in Idaho. The CSP grant award will have an immediate and significant impact as Bluum and the consortium work to meet the existing and growing demand for more high performing charter schools throughout Idaho.

In closing, I ask that you award Idaho's CSP grant request. These funds will meet a known need and will allows Idaho's innovative, entrepreneurial school leaders (and future leaders) to create more seats at high performing schools. Bluum and the consortium making up the Idaho coalition are the right group to maximize the success and impact of the CSP grant award.

Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Keith Donahue

Sage International School of Boise

**Executive Director** 

www.sageinternationalschool.org



April 16, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing you to emphatically support Idaho's application for the Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant. Bluum, an Idaho-based non-profit advocate for quality schools of choice, is shepherding Idaho's CSP application and represents a consortium of partners that seek to maximize support for the state's burgeoning high-performing charter school portfolio.

As the principal of Atlanta Classical Academy, I write this letter as a daily practitioner and leader of a 630-student classical K-12 charter school focused on growing citizens of sound character and bright intellect. Our school, which continues to sustain a year-over-year 1,100+ student wait list, benefited greatly from a CSP federal startup grant. Our \$650,000 grant enabled Atlanta Classical Academy to absorb the financial shocks of a school opening and allowed us to purchase vital curriculum materials, IT resources, and other critical components in order to support teachers in classrooms and provide a robust startup for our school. As a result of the grant—and a well-qualified faculty teaching a content-rich curriculum—Atlanta Classical Academy has steadily exceeded district and state averages on Georgia Milestones standardized tests. In addition, on average, our students across grades K-8 perform at least one grade level above their national peers in every subject area of the lowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and beginning with fifth grade, our students on average perform three or more grade levels above their national peers in ELA, social studies, and science. On the most recent PSAT/NMSQT, fully 70% of our 11th grade students scored in the top 25% nationally, and 24% of our students scored in the top 10% nationally.

I write this letter because I have signed a contract with Bluum to stand up and lead another school like Atlanta Classical Academy in a small agricultural community about 60 miles from Boise by August 2019. As a school leader who has opened a charter school in Georgia, I am acutely aware of the empowering impact a CSP grant makes on the early years of a charter school. As a future Idaho charter school leader, I strongly endorse Idaho's application to obtain a CSP grant and stand by to assist and support in any way possible.

Respectfully,

S. P. Lambert Principal

S.P. Lambo

virtus scientia felicitas

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A Venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202



RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and nonprofit sectors. The most important of these are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter operators and governing boards.

As founding chair of one of Idaho's newest charters, Future Public School (FPS), I have learned first-hand how challenging it is to open a school. State regulations are both numerous and complex while funding for facilities, training and start-up costs are non-existent. Without the expertise of and the introduction to community partners by Bluum, our school would not have moved beyond an idea. Instead, we will open this fall and fill a critical need in Idaho, providing innovative STEM programming and building engineers of the future and of our community. Our student community has been historically underserved. We have intentionally created a school that is largely low-income and diverse by design. Our goal is to replicate in the next two years, but we will only be able to do so if we are able to leverage support from Bluum and its partners in the future.

Apart from Future Public School's journey, I have also become familiar with the story of Idaho's public charter schools. It is a story energized by an entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level, inspired by citizens who believe public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

Idaho's 52 public charter schools serve about 22,000 students statewide. Some of the state's highest performing public schools on **state** ISAT achievement tests in both English Language Arts and mathematics perennially are charter schools. The same holds for the SAT. Idaho charter school students show more academic growth than their peers in traditional schools. This true of all students, including economically disadvantaged and minority students.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to positively impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state. I urge you to support Bluum's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Mat Man

Sincerely,
Matt Kuzio
Board Chair and Founder



March 30, 2018 The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express strong support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

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As the Director of Place Network, an initiative of Teton Science Schools, our goal is to reimagine rural futures through transformative place-based education in a network of innovative rural schools. We currently are partnered with the McCall Community School, an emerging charter school in McCall, Idaho. Bluum has provided advice and feedback as we have drafted an application to the state charter school commission. Additionally, we are piloting an online solution for rural students that deeply connects and contextualizes STEM based learning for students in remote locations. Bluum has provided continued guidance through the design phase. They are experts in their field and understand the Idaho landscape and the needs of the students who live in the state. With additional resources, Bluum, leading a consortium of partners, could significantly and positively impact student learning in the state as well as serve as a model for other rural states.

Within the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:



- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
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- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
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Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state. I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

Nate McClennen

Vice President for Education and Innovation, Teton Science Schools

Director, Place Network Program



April 2, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Girls Athletic Leadership Schools Inc. (GALS), a growing national network of public schools dedicated to the achievement and self-development of all children via a movement based education model.

My name is Liz Wolfson and I am the Founder of GALS Inc., and I am writing to you in support of the Idaho Communities of Excellence application to the Charter School Program Grant Fund of the US Department of Education.

Our organization has been involved with the lead partner in the Consortium, BLUUM, for multiple years, and I can honestly say that after having worked with like organizations in at least a handful of other states, that I have not encountered such a mature, committed and thoughtful organization, with a worldview of equity and opportunity for all children in all regions of their state, as does BLUUM.

I have reviewed the key objectives of their proposal and I have full faith that they will not only accomplish their set outputs and outcomes, but they will far exceed them. I am particularly impressed by their stated goal to evaluate and report widely the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system; and to become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can leverage their expertise to help communities start, expand and improve charter schools. These two outcomes are so crucial to the continued success of the public education system and I am grateful to the Idaho Communities of Excellence for including these in their proposal.

My understanding of the goals of the Charter School Program Grant Funding is to enable communities across the country to truly make a difference in the lives of children via ambitious authorizers and schools developers who understand accountability and long term sustainability. I would put my money only behind organizations like BLUUM. Idaho is a lucky state to have them and this consortium that has applied for this funding.

Thank you for giving them your full consideration. They are blue chip!

Sincerely

Liz Wolfson

Founder, GALS Inc.



Office: 208-453-8070 Facsimile: 208-453-8077

March 30, 2018

The Honorable Betsy De Vos Secretary of Education 400 Maryland A venue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

RE: Letter of Support for Bluum's Application for Federal Charter School Program Grant Funding

Dear Secretary De Vos,

I am writing to express **strong** support for Idaho's application for Federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant Funding. Critical to this proposal's objectives, the nonprofit statewide charter school support entity Bluum is prepared to lead *a consortium of state partners*. Bluum's partners are many and come from both the public and the nonprofit sectors. The most important of which are the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, the non-profit school facilities finance group Building Hope, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho Charter School Network, and individual charter school operators and governing boards.

The story of Idaho's public charter schools is a story energized by a can-do entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is driven by individuals who take personal responsibility for the collective good of their communities. Their efforts are the very manifestation of the original intent of charter schools: innovation at the local level inspired by citizens who believe that the public schools properly belong to the public, and that education is the community's responsibility.

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Speaking for my charter school, Heritage Community Charter works hard to provide an excellent school option for parents and students in the Treasure Valley. We're only 7 years in the making, but in that short time we've grown in experience and success. When compared to our local area traditional public schools, we've ranked among the top performing schools in the surrounding district when comparing Idaho Standards Achievement Tests in both Math and English Language Arts. Our school has grown to having waiting lists of close to 300 at times, and currently sitting at 226 as we head into Spring. At times we've heard the misconception that perhaps Charter Schools are "selective" in their process for selecting students, that this

accounts for their success. We're proud of the fact that Heritage Community Charter closely represents our community's demographics of almost 70% students living in lower SES, over half of our students are minorities, and almost a quarter of our students are English Language learners. We have a very devoted group of teachers committed to helping students learn, child by child, skill by skill. We work hard as a team for each child's success. We would not be here without the support of Bluum and the expert support they've lent me and my team over the years. They truly are experts at their craft, and are among the biggest supporters of quality charter schools.

As the nation's fastest growing state, Bluum, on behalf of the Idaho Consortium, is seeking grant support to:

- 1. Increase the number of quality charter school seats, especially for our most educationally disadvantaged and rural students, through start-up, replication and expansion.
- 2. Support the Public Charter School Commission in expanding its quality authorizing efforts while supporting best practices for other authorizers across the state.
- 3. Evaluate and report the successes and lessons of charter schools to impact the broader education system.
- 4. Become a national model for how a consortium of organizations from the public and nonprofit sectors can to help communities start and expand charter schools.

Idahoans value their public charter schools. They want more of them because they see them working for children across the state.

I urge you to support Idaho's application for Charter School Program dollars. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

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Javier Castaneda
Executive Director

Heritage Community Charter School

(208)453-8070



April 5, 2018

Secretary Betsy DeVos
The U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington C.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

I am writing to you on behalf of Idaho Arts Charter School to express my strong support for Idaho's application for the Expanding Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Program (CPS) Grants to State Entities program.

Idaho Arts Charter School is an "arts-based and arts-integrated" K-12 school in Nampa, ID. We have grown from 400 students housed in portables in 2005 to 1200 students and two buildings in 2018; we are the largest brick and mortar charter school in Idaho. Our population is comprised of 50% low income, 20% Hispanic and 75% first-generation college students. Our college prep, the arts-based program brings a valuable arts opportunity to students in this low-income area. These students wouldn't get this rich exposure to participate in and be taught by practicing artists in dance, music, drama, and visual arts if they didn't attend our school.

Enrollment in Idaho's public schools is projected to grow by 30,000+ new students in the next 10 years. Idaho has become a very popular place to move because of the low cost of living and the quality environment. With that growth, we will need more options for these incoming families and for our current families.

Charters are a popular option for Idaho families because Idahoans tend to be fiercely independent and want to make their own decisions about their children's education. With charters being the driving force behind innovation in this state we need more of them and need to expand some of our high achieving ones. Our unique arts based model is so highly desirable that we have over 1000 students on our waitlist year after year.

The school funding for education in Idaho is lower than 75% of other states. That makes it *extremely difficult* to even consider opening a charter school without grant and philanthropic funding. The biggest hurdle to conquer is facilities and equipment. We currently have a team set up to work on expansion but definitely need additional funds in order to replicate our highly desired arts integrated charter school or develop a STEAM model that so many states are currently embracing. We have been financially supported by the Albertsons Foundation, Bluum, and the Idaho State Department of Education through numerous grants and wouldn't be where we are today without that support.

CSP funds will provide that type of support for the innovative growth of the desperately needed additional charter schools in this state. We believe at idaho Arts Charter School that every child deserves the opportunity to bloom, thrive and reach their peak educational potential. Your support of Idaho's CSP application is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Jackie Collins

Idaho Arts Charter School

**Executive Director**