

**7-24-2024- Reno City Council Meeting - Item # J.1 Public Comment**

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## Public Comment - Mater Academy Special Use Permit

Angela Orr <Angela.Orr@doralnnv.org>

Wed 7/24/2024 5:08 PM

To:Public Comment - CC <PublicComment@reno.gov>

Dear Mayor Schieve and Esteemed Members of the Reno City Council,

I am writing to express my views on the Mater Academy of Northern Nevada expansion appeal. As a dedicated educator in Washoe County for 23 years, serving in various roles including teacher, curriculum specialist, professional learning facilitator, and principal, and as a parent of a high school student within WCSD, I am deeply invested in the future of education in our community. I also serve on the Nevada State Board of Education representing Washoe County and Congressional District 2, although the opinions expressed here are solely my own and do not reflect an official statement from my office.

First and foremost, I am committed to ensuring that every student in our community has access to high-quality education, irrespective of their background or financial circumstances. Our public schools must continuously strive to improve, but our students cannot afford to wait. It is imperative that our city leaders support economic diversity and development while also providing ample educational choices for our children so that they are prepared and able to participate in these economic opportunities.

The Washoe County School District itself values school choice, stating on their website, **“School of Choice is a system where Washoe County School District (WCSD) families can choose which school they want their children to attend. We believe students will be the most successful in the school where they feel connected and seen and with an academic program that best suits their needs.”** This principle of choice is crucial for all families, particularly those underserved by existing school options. Mater Academy currently serves a highly impacted student population similar to nearby elementary schools, facing comparable challenges but with less public funding and higher standards to meet. Families choose Mater Academy because they witness the tangible difference in their children's education—a testament to its highly qualified staff, exemplary leadership, community involvement, rigorous curriculum, daily emphasis on social-emotional learning, and valuable partnership with the Boys and Girls Club. Mater Academy has consistently demonstrated higher student growth rates compared to neighboring schools, affirming its appeal to many families in our community, including those in the North Valleys who deserve similar educational opportunities.

Addressing concerns that Mater Academy might "steal" students and teachers from WCSD schools, it's important to note that school choice inherently involves shifts in student populations and teacher assignments within districts. This happens annually in Washoe County School District, because by design, public school teachers follow public school students. If Mater Academy expands, it will create employment opportunities for teachers who will receive competitive wages, benefits, and PERS enrollment. These educators will benefit from a positive and professional school culture focused on student success, family engagement and increased opportunities for professional learning. Moreover, using terms like "steal" to describe parental choice undermines and insults the informed decisions families make regarding their children's education.

Throughout my career, I have advocated passionately for our dedicated teachers, believing they are fundamental to our democratic society. With a steadfast commitment to public education and the belief that every student deserves an exceptional learning environment, I urge you to support the special use permit for Mater Academy. Their rigorous approval process with the State Public Charter School Authority affirms their readiness to meet or exceed all standards for expansion, including site selection criteria.

Our community seeks diverse educational options to meet the needs of our children. I urge the City Council to respect the thorough evaluation conducted by your Administrator and to honor the desires of citizens like myself who advocate for the best possible education for all young people.

Sincerely,

Angela Orr

## I .1Mater Academy

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Wed 7/24/2024 5:09 PM

To:Public Comment - CC <PublicComment@reno.gov>

I see no reason to not re-approve this request. Mater is a public charter school and this particular school will service a unique group of children. I do hate to see school funds go to private schools, but since this is a public charter, I am in favor as long as many contingencies are met.

Wendy Boszak  
Ward 4