

Dear State Board of Education,

I am standing here today to discuss with you my feelings about the Commissioner's decision to close down our school, the Paulo Freire Charter School, due to alleged "poor academic performance." My peers and I were taken by surprise and flabbergasted by the sudden announcement of our school closure, and the way in which the decision was given. We all found out about the closure via the media, and articles such as yours, and this manner of delivering such a message did not take into account our social and emotional needs.

I attended the May 3, 2017 State Board of Education meeting this past week, and I challenged the Board and the Commissioner to walk, not a mile, but three years in my shoes: from entering high school as a 9th grader leaving 8th grade with an IEP, and C's, D's, and a few F's, to staying late each week with teachers who refused to give up on me, to coming in on Saturday for intervention, and to now being a junior in all honors classes.

Being a student at Paulo Freire Charter School has been one of the greatest privileges in my life. The school has supported me, and given me a place of peace when I have had troubles at home. I am a junior at the Paulo Freire School, and I am seeing all of my educational possibilities open up. Now, all of this hard work is being washed away because of one decision.

It was my hope that if the Commissioner were to go through with shutting down our school, that my classmates and I would be guaranteed placement in schools where we can be just as successful, where we would feel comfortable, where we can be supported, and where we can build a small support system. Unfortunately, we are faced with NewarkEnrolls decisions that have placed us in schools that neither meet nor exceed the standards of the Paulo Freire Charter School.

All I can do when I hear of where many of my peers have been placed is think, "Why are we being forced to leave a good school to attend a poor one? If this decision was about us, why aren't they making sure that we have what we need?" It's like this decision was made, and then they stepped away and didn't care about what happened to us. This is not fair!

The Commissioner's decision has not only affected me, but also everyone connected with the good work that is happening at our school. Basically, we have been given a restart, and now we are being told that it is being taken away from us, and that we are on our own.

Sincerely,
Amaya White
Junior Student, Paulo Freire Charter School