



March 5, 2026

Mr. Bruce Friend, Chair  
North Carolina Charter School Review Board

Ms. Ashley Logue, Executive Director  
Office of Charter Schools  
North Carolina Department of Education

**Re: Cape View Leadership Academy – Presentation of ACCEL Schools**

Dear Chairman Friend:

We look forward to appearing before the CSRB next Monday, March 9, 2026, in connection with Cape View Leadership Academy’s (“CVLA”) application to open a charter school in Pender County. As you know, the State Board of Education remanded CVLA’s application last month to allow ACCEL Schools East LLC (“ACCEL”)<sup>1</sup> as the school’s proposed education management organization, to present information and answer questions. In advance of that meeting, we wanted to provide the following, which summarizes the information we intend to provide the Review Board.

**Proposed Management Agreement**

CVLA included a draft Management Agreement with ACCEL in its application. The agreement remains a draft and we have not executed a final management agreement with CVLA. CVLA attached a draft Management Agreement, as opposed to a final, for two reasons: First, both we and CVLA wanted to wait to sign a final agreement only if the application is approved. Second, since this would be the first charter school that ACCEL would serve in North Carolina (ACCEL already has significant ongoing pre-k operations in the North Carolina), we wanted to make sure we could change any provisions to address concerns raised in the Review Board’s interviews.

In reviewing the proposed draft agreement, it is important to keep in mind that it leaves significant power with CVLA and its board. The agreement requires ACCEL to comply with any policies adopted by CVLA’s board (§ 3.2). ACCEL also cannot enter into any contracts or spend any money on behalf of the school unless the board has authorized it as part of the annual budget (§1.2(a)(v)), and the agreement requires ACCEL to deliver regular financial reports to the board (same). Perhaps most importantly, the agreement gives CVLA the right to terminate the agreement without cause at the end of any school year, and to terminate for cause on 30 days’ notice (§§7.1, 7.3). These are powerful tools that provide context to the draft agreement. If the board controls all

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<sup>1</sup> ACCEL Schools East, LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACCEL Schools, LLC.

spending through the budget and can terminate the agreement without cause, it has significant power to oversee ACCEL's actions and renegotiate provisions of the contract if necessary.

With this in mind, we address several of the specific provisions in the proposed Management Agreement as follows:

(1) *Facilities.* During the interview, there were several questions about what the terms would be if CVLA chooses to lease property from ACCEL or its affiliated companies. Please know that any such discussion is hypothetical at this point. CVLA has told us that its first choice is to find an existing facility to lease and board members are actively searching for sites within Pender County.

However, as both we and CVLA's board indicated, if CVLA chooses to lease property from ACCEL or one of its affiliates, the parties all agree that (i) the lease will be separate from the Management Agreement, so that termination of one will not lead to termination of the other; (ii) any lease or development agreement will grant CVLA an option to purchase the facility.

(2) *Equipment and Computers.* The proposed agreement anticipates that ACCEL will provide furniture, equipment, and computers that meet the school's needs and those of its educational program. Since schools typically lease these items directly (and they are not usually included as part of management services provided by an EMO), the proposed agreement states that CVLA shall enter into separate agreements for these items. ACCEL has provided CVLA's board with the pricing for these items and those figures are incorporated into the school's proposed budget.

During the first interview, members of the board asked whether CVLA could lease computers and equipment elsewhere if it finds a better price. The agreement does not set the price, which CVLA's board would have to approve as part the budget, and thus we continue to believe that CVLA could negotiate these items even under the current contractual language. That said, CVLA and ACCEL have agreed to modify the provisions in the final agreement to replace the word "shall" with "may" so that it is permissive. CVLA has also indicated that it is willing to accept that change as a stipulation of its charter.

(3) *Payroll Administration.* Under the proposed agreement, ACCEL will be responsible for employing most of the staff, who will be paid out of the school's budget, which means ACCEL will be responsible for administering the school's payroll and benefits as part of the benefits provided under the management agreement. (See §§ 1.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3). In the interview, the Review Board noted that the proposed budget includes a line item for payroll administrative services. This item reflects the pass-through of direct expenses incurred to maintain the payroll platform for personnel assigned to the school, as well as service charges by the relevant financial institutions.

(4) *AMP Fee.* The agreement provides that CVLA will be provided use of AMP, which is ACCEL's proprietary software platform for student information management and communications with parents, as part of the management fee. During the interview, there seemed to be some question why the agreement also includes a provision for an "AMP Fee" in Section

4.1(b). As the agreement explains, CVLA would only pay that additional fee if it decides to purchase AMP Premium, which includes not only student information management, but also educational and instructional content (which is normally not included in an EMOs' management services).

### ***ACCEL Operations and Performance in Other States***

Prior to the first interview, Board Members received a report from DPI staff regarding ACCEL's performance and operations in other states. ACCEL acknowledges variation in academic performance across schools and states and approaches improvement through targeted supports, turnaround strategies, and, where appropriate, school restart or closure decisions.

In many instances, ACCEL has been invited by authorizers or independent, nonprofit governing boards to provide educational products and services to schools that were already experiencing academic, operational, or fiscal challenges under prior operators. These engagements often involve school restarts, relaunches, or turnaround efforts initiated by the governing board or authorizer, and performance data during such transitions should be interpreted in light of pre-existing conditions and restart timelines.

Specifically, 50 of 88 charter schools currently contracting with ACCEL, are takeovers, or 57 percent. Of the charter schools that ACCEL contracted with since the company's inception that are no longer under contract, all but two, or 87 percent, were takeovers.

While partnering with ACCEL, most schools, especially schools in Ohio, demonstrated substantial improvement and strong academic performance on state measurements during the 2024-25 school year *and* outpaced growth in other charter and district schools. It is important to note that ACCEL's partner charter schools in Ohio receive 60 percent of the funding allocated to district counterparts. In addition, until 2021 charter schools were only allowed in the lowest performing districts.

- The highest performing LEA in Ohio is managed by ACCEL.
- The top 5 LEAs on Value-Add Growth Index are managed by ACCEL.
- 28 Ohio brick and mortar schools managed by ACCEL will receive Quality Charter Funding for SY25/26, an increase of ten over the previous year.
- Schools managed by ACCEL had an average value-added GPA of 2.47 compared to 2.04 for the big eight school districts in the state.
- Compared to the 2023-2024 school year, ACCEL-managed schools increased Performance Improvement by an average of 4.9+ bps, while non-ACCEL community (charter) schools improved on avg. +2.1 bps and district schools improved on avg. +0.9 bps.

### ***Staffing within Proposed Budget***

CVLA board members were asked about staffing in the proposed budget during the first interview. Specifically, Board Members asked about an apparent lack of staff to support EC students and teachers for CTE courses. Following the interview, the CVLA board and ACCEL confirmed that these functions are included in under "Contractors" within the proposed budget. The CVLA board recognizes that, as the first charter school in Pender County, it is difficult to predict the number of

students in different EC categories. As a small charter school, CVLA may need fractional EC teachers to ensure teachers with appropriate credentials and endorsements are serving each student identified as EC. Contracting with EC teachers provides maximum flexibility to ensure compliance.

CVLA will start with a focus on three career pathways but expects to flex and add pathways based on changes in the local economy and student interest. The school board also wants to attract practitioners to teach CTE courses and mentor students, as possible. To maintain flexibility within the CTE staffing model, the school wants to contemplate fractional contractors.

### ***ACCEL's Experience with Career and Technical Education (CTE)***

During the first interview, CVLA board members were asked about ACCEL's experience with CTE programs or schools. ACCEL has several years of experience managing schools using the ACCEL CTE program. As of the end of the first semester of the 2025-26 school year, ACCEL partners with 12 schools (including online and brick and mortar) focused primarily on CTE and 22 brick and mortar schools that offer career pathways within ACCEL's CTE program. There are 2,500 students in career pathways within these schools and programs. These students completed 6,000 CTE electives, and students earned 1,100 credentials upon completion of a pathway.

ACCEL's CTE program includes specific pre-pathway courses for middle school students, rather than the standard "exploratory" courses offered in most middle school CTE program. Additionally, ACCEL is adding several pathways each year based on student and industry demand.

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We hope the Review Board finds these clarifications helpful as it reviews CVLA's application.

Best regards.

Respectfully,

*Mary Gifford*

Mary Gifford,  
Executive Vice President for Business Development  
and New Initiatives

cc: Cape View Leadership Academy Board of Directors  
ACCEL Schools, LLC