

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 26, 2023

Media Contact:  
Adam Hughes  
203-906-9161  
[adam@socm.org](mailto:adam@socm.org)

## **Knox County Parents, Teachers, and Community Members Host Press Conference to Urge Board of Education to Reject New Charter School Proposal**

**WHEN:** Thursday, April 27, 4pm EST

**WHERE:** Summer Place Building, 500 W. Summit Hill Drive, Knoxville, TN 37902

**[KNOX COUNTY, TN]** – Parents, teachers, community leaders, and concerned community members will gather outside of Knox County Schools' offices for a press conference prior to the start of the specially-called Knox County Board of Education meeting to urge the Board to reject the deeply flawed application for a proposed charter school for a second time.

Chattanooga Preparatory School's proposal for a privately run, taxpayer funded, all-boys school, failed to win majority approval at the April 6th Board meeting. Central to this outcome were claims of inaccurate data in its application, fading support among community members, and dishonest presentation of support from community organizations.

The Board is not offering a public forum during the specially-called meeting for the vote; however, community members will be available to speak with the media before-hand, including Knoxville NAACP President Reverend Sam Brown, retired West Hills Elementary teacher Candace Bannister, and Knox County parent Keith Britt.

Candice Bannister says,

*"I'm not a fan of charter schools, but I know that state law requires a concrete reason for the Board to deny an application. I even thought their initial presentation to the Knox County charter committee was impressive. However, once we started digging deeper, clear issues emerged with this application. The number of low-income students they serve in Chattanooga was much smaller than they initially claimed. They reported a lot of community support in Knox County, but almost everyone from our community who showed up at the Board meeting spoke against their application. Many of the organizations and individuals they represented as community support turned out not to have endorsed their application. When these mistakes were pointed out, the administration of the proposed school refused to withdraw their application in order to correct them. In my classroom, a student who turned in a paper with mistakes would not be getting top marks. Why aren't we holding the people who want to run a school to the same standard?"*

At the Board meeting and work session in early April, Board members and Knox County residents raised serious concerns about the application. [Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment \(SOCM\)](#) compiled some of these statements in a series of two brief videos focused on [community opposition to the school](#) and [educational equity and Title IX concerns](#).

According to District 3 Representative Daniel Watson, *“Those who are coming from outside a community cannot come up with the best solution for a community itself, because solutions have to be contextualized... I believe over the last 18 months you’ve been in the community you’ve actually lost support.”*

District 1 Representative John Butler summarized his district’s feelings on the application stating, *“From our perspective, this is the white takeover process. And this is affecting our (existing public) school.”*

Community members focused on the misleading way that community endorsements were portrayed and the exclusion of girls from this publicly funded school, with Knoxville NAACP President Sam Brown characterizing the proposed charter school’s approach: *“How can we on the front end begin to... look for loopholes in a Title IX policy that was originally intended to ensure equity for all of our students?”*

#####

### **About SOCM**

Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (pronounced SOCK-um) is a member-driven nonprofit based in Tennessee that is dedicated to empowering Tennesseans in their efforts to have a greater voice in determining their own future. SOCM is celebrating its 50th year of training and organizing members to fight for a more just and equitable Tennessee. The organization is led by a board of directors and operates through local chapters and statewide committees. Currently, SOCM members are working hard to defend public education in the state. Visit [socm.org](http://socm.org) to learn more.