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TO: Auditor General Timothy DeFoor  
FROM: Susan Spicka, Executive Director, Education Voters of PA  
RE: Urgent need for a forensic audit of Commonwealth Charter Academy  
DATE: June 17, 2024

Dear Auditor General DeFoor:

I am writing today to again bring to your attention serious concerns about Commonwealth Charter Academy and request that you immediately open a forensic audit of the school to help ensure accountability and transparency for CCA's use of tax dollars.

It has been more than a decade since CCA has been audited by the Auditor General's office. With no state oversight of this organization's spending for so many years, the opportunities for waste, fraud, and abuse are staggering.

In addition, as Pennsylvania's largest cyber charter school, Commonwealth Charter Academy (CCA)'s flagrant disregard for transparency and their concealment of information from the public about how they spend more than \$500 million in tax money annually demonstrates the urgent need for outside oversight of their spending.

CCA does not publicly post documents containing policies, bill payments, and contracts on the board's consent or action agendas. Instead, the public must ask for these documents to be shared individually. **And CCA often arbitrarily excludes information in the materials it shares with the public.**

**CCA excluded financial documents from the [board materials provided for the June 12, 2024 meeting](#).**

- Pages 162-169 are missing from the board materials CCA provided.
- The excluded pages include detailed financial information that was provided to the board verbally beginning at [1:18:00 of this video of the meeting](#).
- This oral report included information about, among other things, "CCA's Cash Investment Schedule," which shows CCA with **"a little over \$222 million cash on hand at the end of April."**

**Hundreds of vendors were redacted from board materials.**

- CCA is spending taxpayer dollars without any disclosure or public accountability.
- In April CCA paid \$11.6 million out of the "general operating account," including more than \$180,000 to 380 vendors that were blacked out. Amounts paid to blacked out vendors ranged from \$20 to \$7,800 and include:
  - 89 blacked out vendors that received exactly \$300.
  - 18 more blacked out vendors that received exact multiples of \$300.
  - 123 blacked out vendors that received exactly \$550.
  - 10 blacked out vendors that received exactly \$1,662.
  - The total amount paid to blacked out vendors in a single month was more than \$180,000.

**The board documents that CCA did share over the past three months show obscene wasteful spending of tax dollars.**

- **CCA approved more than \$50 million in spending on construction costs in a two-month period.** In April and May CCA approved facilities-related contracts for construction that total [\\$53,783,732](#).

- In those two months, CCA, a cyber charter school that does not educate students in buildings, approved capital investments that exceed the total expenditures of 298 school districts for their entire 2022-2023 school year.

**CCA paid marketing costs that topped \$455,966 for a single month.**

- CCA made at least five payments to at least three marketing firms in April alone, including one in New York City, totaling **\$455,966.45**.
- These include:
 

o True Marketing (x2)	\$43,960.56
o WebFX (x2)	\$46,775.00
o AI Media Group	\$365,376.00

**CCA spent nearly \$80,000 on legal and lobbying costs in a single month.**

- In one month, CCA made 13 payments to law firms totaling \$60,977.14.
- CCA spent \$17,500 on payments to a lobbying firm.
- NOTE: CCA also employs a full-time “Senior Vice President of Outreach and Government Relations,” a registered lobbyist, whose [salary and benefits totaled \\$230,287 in the fiscal year ending in 2022](#).

**CCA spent more than \$200,000 in only one month for vehicle “upfitting” and purchases.**

- In a single month, CCA paid \$157,304 to 911 Rapid Response, a “vehicle upfitter” in Georgia that [features a CCA bus wrap the company produced on its website](#).
- In a single month CCA made two payments to LB Smith Ford car and truck dealership totaling \$48,445.40

**CCA has more than \$900,000 in annual contracts with organizations that are paid to help enroll and provide services to CCA students.**

- Contracts would provide for five organizations to be paid \$325 per student per month to assist families with enrolling in CCA, host events, and provide various other services and support to students.
- Contracts are for twelve months per year and total \$75,400 per month, or more than \$900,000 per year.
- One contract provides for up to 65 slots (\$21,125 per month) at the Philadelphia Hockey Academy.

**These are taxpayer dollars.**

Pennsylvanians rely on the Auditor General’s office to fight against waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer funding and to ensure that precious school tax dollars are being invested wisely into educating our public school students. I most strongly urge you to immediately open a forensic audit of CCA to help ensure transparency and accountability for how this organization is spending hundreds of millions of tax dollars each year, and specifically to investigate the issues raised in this letter.

I request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Susan Spicka, Executive Director, Education Voters of PA

[April CCA board documents](#) These include the proposed 2024-2025 CCA budget.

[May CCA board documents](#)

[June CCA board documents](#) The materials provided to the public black out the names of 380 vendors and do not contain pp. 162-169 of the board meeting materials, which contain detailed financial information.

[Ed Voters report on obscene cyber charter asset hoarding and waste](#)