To: The Merced County Board of Education

From: California Charter Authorizing Professionals

Subject: Committee Report Regarding the Merced Scholars Charter School Renewal Charter Petition

Date: May 28, 2026

The Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) contracted with California Charter Authorizing Professionals (CCAP) to provide a comprehensive review of all aspects of the renewal petition from its county-sponsored (and locally funded) Merced Scholars Charter School (MSCS) submitted April 24, 2026, and to produce a report documenting any findings of fact. This comprehensive review explicitly excludes a determination of fiscal viability; MCOE staff will submit any statements regarding its fiscal analysis as an addendum to this report. This Renewal Report provides review details and findings of fact related to the renewal requirements outlined in California Education Code (EC) § 47605(b).

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The comprehensive review of the Merced Scholars Charter School (MSCS) renewal petition finds that the school presents a clear and complete petition, demonstrates compliance with EC § 47605, and maintains a stable operational structure under the governance of the Merced County Board of Education. Academic performance places MSCS in the **Middle Performing** renewal tier, with Dashboard data showing a mixed but improving trajectory. While English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics remain below state averages, both indicators show recent gains after several years of decline. Science, English Learner Progress, and College/Career Readiness demonstrate notable improvement, and graduation rates, suspension rates, and assessment participation reflect consistent strengths. Chronic absenteeism has improved significantly since 2023, though disparities persist for some student groups.

The school continues to serve a student population that closely mirrors county socioeconomic demographics and enrolls a comparatively higher proportion of students with disabilities, indicating that MSCS is serving all pupils who wish to attend. No governance or operational deficiencies were identified as part of this review, and no concerns were raised under the "not serving all pupils" standard, although County Office staff indicate there is a pending related complaint. The petition includes required assurances, a valid certification of completion, and necessary updates that align with current statutory requirements. Areas requiring minor clarification do not rise to the level of material deficiencies and do not impede renewal eligibility.

Based on the totality of evidence, including academic performance trends, student group outcomes, operational compliance, and adherence to statutory requirements, **the Merced Scholars Charter School renewal petition likely meets the requirements for renewal**. As a Middle Performing school, MSCS is eligible for a **five-year renewal term**, and this review finds no substantial basis for denial under EC §§ 47605, 47607, or 47607.2.

II. BACKGROUND

MSCS is a locally funded hybrid program that offers students a range of opportunities and services through both independent study and classroom-based instruction. The school serves approximately 300 students in grades K-12, with a student population that closely mirrors district and county socioeconomic levels. Nearly 80% of students are identified as socio-economically disadvantaged. The school enrolls far fewer English Learners than local and state averages and serves a slightly higher share of homeless youth and students with disabilities than the district.

The primary office is located at 1640 N Street in Merced, with additional non-classroom-based resource centers in Atwater and Los Banos. The Dual Language Academy operates at 1850 Wardrobe Avenue in Merced. MSCS began serving students on August 16, 2004, and has successfully renewed each five-year term (2009, 2014, and 2019). The current renewal term was extended through July 1, 2026, under EC § 47607.4. This renewal petition requests a new charter term from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2031.

III. CHARTER RENEWAL LEGAL STANDARDS

Timeline

In compliance with EC § 47605(b), the Merced County Board of Education (MCBOE) will hold a public hearing on the provisions of the charter to consider the level of support for the petition by teachers employed by the MCBOE, other employees, and

parents. EC § 47605(b) requires that the MCBOE conduct a second public hearing and render its decision on the request within 90 days of receipt of a petition certified complete, unless both parties agree to an extension. The authorizing board must publish all staff recommendations, including the recommended findings, at least 15 days prior to the determination hearing.

Traditional Charter Renewal

California charter school renewal petitions are reviewed against the applicable standards and criteria established in EC §§ 47607 and 47607.2. Renewals are governed by the standards and criteria in EC § 47605, including consideration of any new requirements of charter schools enacted into law after the charter was originally granted or last renewed. When a renewal petition includes a proposed expansion to additional sites or grade levels, the school must request a material revision, which is evaluated under EC § 47605 standards, including an evaluation of the impact of the proposed change. The findings in paragraphs (7) and (8) of subdivision (c) of EC § 47605 warranting denial of a petition (community interest and fiscal impact) may not be used to deny renewal of an existing charter school. They may, however, be used to deny a material revision such as a proposed expansion.

Under EC §§ 47607 and 47607.2, the authorizing board must consider schoolwide and numerically significant pupil student group performance on state and local indicators in the evaluation rubrics adopted pursuant to EC § 52064.5. For a school that does not have Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS) and that meets the Middle Performance Criteria described below, the authorizing board is required under EC § 47607.2(b) to give relatively greater weight to academic performance measurements on statewide assessments.

Description of Renewal Criteria and Standards

Data Indicators for Renewal Evaluation

The California Dashboard displays academic and non-academic outcomes. Academic Indicators include state English-Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, English Learner Progress, and College/Career Readiness Indicators. These indicators are used to determine a traditional charter school's renewal track.

- **Middle Performance Criteria:** Schools are placed in this tier when they meet neither the criteria for presumptive renewal based on *high performance* status nor for presumptive non-renewal based on *low performance* status.
- **High Performance Criteria:** Schools are placed in this tier when they have earned all blue and green Dashboard indicators or have outperformed statewide results on specific academic indicators, All Students, and for applicable student groups. There is a presumption that the school will be renewed.

- **Low Performance Criteria:** Schools are placed in this tier when they have earned all red and orange Dashboard indicators or are performing below statewide results on specific academic indicators, All Students, and at the student group level. There is a presumption that the school will not be renewed. Specific requirements must be met for the charter to be renewed.

Student group data comparisons with statewide results are not factored into renewal tier placement when that specific group's statewide performance exceeds the state's overall student performance. In the previous two Dashboard years, the performance of White, Asian, Filipino, and Two or More Races student groups on academic indicators exceeded the statewide performance and is therefore not factored in.

Non-Academic Indicators are described as Academic Engagement and Conditions & Climate. Engagement indicators include K-8 Chronic Absenteeism and 9-12 Graduation Rate. The Suspension Rate measures Conditions and Climate.

All other renewal criteria, findings, and procedural requirements in EC §§ 47605, 47607, and 47607.2 remain fully applicable, including:

- The requirements and procedures outlined in EC § 47605;
- Schoolwide and student group performance on the applicable metrics (where data are available);
- The EC § 47607(e) fiscal, governance, and "not serving all pupils" findings (with 30-day notice and opportunity to cure); and
- The applicable renewal term options:
    - High Performing - The authorizing Board has the discretion to approve a five-, six-, or seven-year term.
    - Middle Performing - The authorizing Board may only approve a five-year term.
    - Low-Performing - The authorizing Board shall not renew the petition unless it makes specific findings in accordance with EC § 47607.2(a)(4), in which case it can approve a two-year term.

IV. CHARTER PETITION REVIEW COMMITTEE ANALYSIS

Renewal Tier: Middle Performing
Does the evidence demonstrate that the Charter School, despite its <u>Middle Performance</u> designation, has failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward meeting standards that provide a benefit to the pupils of the school, and that closure of the charter school is in the best interest of

pupils with greater weight applied to schoolwide academic performance measurements and the performance of all numerically significant student groups?
No
Is there evidence supporting a two-year renewal term, despite presumptive non-renewal for a Low-Performance designation, based on the Charter School • **Taking meaningful steps to address the underlying cause or causes of low performance, and** • **Demonstrating measurable increases in academic achievement or strong postsecondary outcomes?**
Not applicable
Is there evidence aligned with academic performance that will support a renewal term of six or seven years for a High-Performance designation, as opposed to a standard five-year term?
Not applicable

In consideration of EC § 47607.2(b) and as an important part of the analysis for charter renewal of a Middle Performance tier charter school, the following data reflect a mixed performance profile, with evidence of both growth and areas where outcomes remain below statewide performance levels. The analysis provides a basis for evaluating the extent to which the school has met, improved, or failed to meet pupil academic achievement expectations across state and local indicators.

Analysis of State Academic Performance Outcomes

Based on the Spring 2024 and Spring 2025 California Dashboard comparison of academic indicators to statewide results, Merced Scholars Charter School was classified as Middle Performing. Under EC § 47607(c)(2), renewal determinations for schools in this category **are not** based solely on absolute performance levels, but also include consideration of longitudinal data, student group performance, and whether closure would be "in the best interest of pupils" as described in EC § 47607.2(b).

English Language Arts (ELA)

ELA performance at Merced Scholars Charter School remains below the state average across all reported student groups in both 2024 and 2025, with schoolwide distance from standard (-44 to -33.8) improving but still trailing statewide results (-13.2 to -8.1). Longitudinal data show a decline in performance from 2019 through 2024, followed by a partial rebound in 2025, indicating recent improvement after multiple years of

decreasing outcomes. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students follow a similar trajectory, with gains in 2025 but continued performance below statewide levels. Hispanic student performance has declined over time, with a further drop in 2025 relative to 2024.

Two-Year English Language Arts Comparison to Statewide
Source: California Dashboard

Groups	Charter Spring 2024	State Spring 2024	At, Above, Below	Charter Spring 2025	State Spring 2025	At, Above, Below
All Students	-44 points	-13.2 points	**Below**	-33.8 points	-8.1 points	**Below**
Socio-economically Disadvantaged	-45.4 points	-40.9 points	**Below**	-38.5 points	-35.3 points	**Below**
Hispanic	-40 points	-39.3 points	**Below**	-43.3 points	-33.7 points	**Below**

Multi-Year English-Language Arts Distance from Standard Performance
Source: California Dashboard

	2019	2022*	2023	2024	2025
All Students	-20 points	-22.5 points	-35.1 points	-44.5 points	-33.8 points
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	-11.9 points	-19.8 points	-44.5 points	-45.4 points	-38.5 points
Hispanic	-24.1 points	-23.3 points	-33.9 points	-40 points	-43.3 points

**Data was not reported in 2021.*

Math

Math performance at Merced Scholars Charter School remains significantly below the state average across all student groups in both 2024 and 2025, with schoolwide distance from standard improving from -134.2 to -116.8 but still far below statewide results (-47.6 to -42.4). Longitudinal data show a substantial decline in performance from 2019 through 2024, followed by modest improvement in 2025, indicating recent gains after several years of worsening outcomes. Socioeconomically disadvantaged and Hispanic students reflect similar trends, with slight year-over-year improvement but persistent

and wide gaps compared to statewide performance. Overall, despite incremental progress, math outcomes remain a critical area of need due to the magnitude and persistence of low performance levels.

Two-Year Math Indicator Comparison to Statewide
Source: California Dashboard

Groups	Charter Spring 2024	State Spring 2024	At, Above, Below	Charter Spring 2025	State Spring 2025	At, Above, Below
All Students	-134.2 points	-47.6 points	**Below**	-116.8 points	-42.4 points	**Below**
Socio-economically Disadvantaged	-131.6 points	-78.2 points	**Below**	-119.2 points	-72.9 points	**Below**
Hispanic	**-140.5 points**	-79.2 points	**Below**	-128.4 points	-73.6 points	**Below**

Multi-Year Math Distance from Standard-Performance
Source: California Dashboard

	2019	2022*	2023	2024	2025
All Students	-20 points	-22.5 points	-35.1 points	-44.5 points	-33.8 points
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	-11.9 points	-19.8 points Low	-44.5 points	-45.4 points	-38.5 points
Hispanic	-24.1 points	-23.3 points	-33.9 points	-40.0 points	-43.3 points

**Data was not reported in 2021.*

English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI)

English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI) outcomes at Merced Scholars Charter School show substantial improvement from 30.8% in 2024 to 45.5% in 2025, bringing performance within one percentage point of the statewide rate (46.4%). Despite remaining slightly below statewide results in both years, the gap narrowed significantly,

indicating accelerated progress. Longitudinal data show some fluctuation: a decline in 2024 following prior gains, followed by a strong rebound in 2025, resulting in the highest performance level reported. Overall, ELPI represents a notable area of growth and relative strength compared to other academic indicators.

Two-Year English Learner Progress Indicator Comparison to Statewide
Source: California Dashboard

Groups	Charter Spring 2024	State Spring 2024	At, Above, Below	Charter Spring 2025	State Spring 2025	At, Above, Below
English Learners	30.8%	45.7%	**Below**	45.5%	46.4%	**Below**

Multi-Year English Learner Progress Indicator Performance
Source: California Dashboard

Groups	2019	2022	2023	2024	2025
English Learners	No Data Available	38.7%	40.9%	30.8%	45.5%

Science (CAST)

Science results show a change in performance between the two years reported. While 2024 results were below statewide results, 2025 results indicate performance at or above the statewide level for certain student groups, including socioeconomically disadvantaged and Hispanic students. Schoolwide results remain slightly below the statewide. This pattern suggests relative strength in science compared to other academic areas, as well as evidence of improvement over time. The Science indicator is new to the California Dashboard, with its first year of reporting in 2024.

Two-Year Science Indicator Comparison to Statewide
Source: California Dashboard

Groups	Charter Spring 2024*	State Spring 2024*	At, Above, Below	Charter Spring 2025	State Spring 2025	At, Above, Below
All Students	-19.7 points	-13.5 points	**Below**	51.2 points	52.6 points	**Below**
Socio-economically Disadvantaged	-19.9 points	-19.1 points	**Below**	49.6 points	47.1 points	**Above**

Hispanic	-21.3 points	-19.3 points	**Below**	52 points	47.1 points	**Above**

*No performance color was assigned in 2024

College and Career Indicator (CCI)

The percentage of students meeting college- and career-readiness criteria increased from 21.2% to 29%, but remains below the statewide rate (51.7%). Longitudinal data show growth from earlier years (e.g., 10% in 2019), indicating a positive trajectory, although current performance levels remain comparatively low.

Two-Year College/Career Indicator Comparison to Statewide
Source: California Dashboard

Groups	Charter Spring 2024	State Spring 2024	At, Above, Below	Charter Spring 2025	State Spring 2025	At, Above, Below
All Students	21.2%	45.3%	**Below**	29%	51.7%	**Below**

Multi-Year College/Career Indicator-Percent Prepared
Source: California Dashboard

	2019	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	10%	Not reported	8.8%	21.2%	29%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	11.1%	Not reported	7.4%	20%	26.9%
Hispanic	7.1%	Not reported	8.7%	20%	32%

Student Group Considerations

The school serves a student population that includes a high proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged and Hispanic students. Across indicators, these student groups generally mirror schoolwide trends: performance below statewide averages with incremental improvement over time. In science, student group performance exceeds the statewide results, representing a deviation from patterns observed in ELA and Mathematics.

Analysis of Additional Outcomes

2025 State Assessment Participation Rates

In 2025, Merced Scholars Charter School met or exceeded the 95% assessment participation threshold in ELA (97%), Math (97%), and ELPAC (100%), demonstrating

strong overall assessment participation. However, participation gaps were evident in ELA for Students with Disabilities (93%) and White students (94%).

2025 State Assessment Participation Rates
Source: California Dashboard Additional Reports

	Overall	Student Groups Below 95%
ELA	97%	Disabilities 93% White 94%
Math	97%	Not Applicable
ELPAC	100%	Not Applicable

Graduation Rate

Graduation rates at Merced Scholars Charter School increased dramatically from 2022 levels to a peak of 100% in 2023, followed by slight declines in 2024 and 2025, with All Students maintaining high outcomes at 97% and 96.8% (Blue). Student group performance mirrors this strong trend, with Socioeconomically Disadvantaged and Hispanic student groups reaching 100% in 2023 and sustaining high graduation rates above 96% thereafter.

Multi-Year Graduation Rate
Source: California Dashboard

	2019	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	80%	78.6%	100%	97%	96.8%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	77.8%	77.3%	100%	96.7%	96.2%
Hispanic	85.7%	88.9%	100%	96.7%	96%

Suspension Rate

Suspension rates at Merced Scholars Charter School remained extremely low across all years, with All Students increasing slightly from 0% (Blue) in 2023-24 to 0.5% (Green) in 2025, indicating continued strong school climate and behavior supports. All student groups maintained similarly low rates, with Students with Disabilities and White students at 0% (Blue) across all years, and only minimal increases among

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged and Hispanic students in 2025 that still reflect favorable outcomes.

Multi-Year Suspension Rate
Source: California Dashboard

	2023	2024	2025
All Students	0% Blue	0% Blue	0.5% Green
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	0% Blue	0% Blue	0.6% Green
Students with Disabilities	0% Blue	0% Blue	0% Blue
Hispanic	0% Blue	0% Blue	0.7% Green
White	0% Blue	0% Blue	0% Blue

Chronic Absenteeism

California Dashboard TK-8 chronic absenteeism data for Merced Scholars Charter School declined from 2023 to 2024 and stabilized in 2025, with All Students improving from 36.6% to 16% and maintaining a Yellow status, reflecting strong overall progress. While the Socioeconomically Disadvantaged and Students with Disabilities student groups followed this trend, the Hispanic student group showed an uptick to 19.5% in 2025 (Orange).

Multi-Year Chronic Absenteeism (Grades TK-8)
Source: California Dashboard

	2023	2024	2025
All Students	36.6%	16.6%	16%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	38.5% Yellow	17.1% Yellow	15.7%
Students with Disabilities	40.7%	16.7%	15.4%
Hispanic	37.3%	17.6%	19.5%

TK-12 chronic absenteeism data reveal similar results from 2023 to 2025. All Students declined from 31.1% in 2023 to 12.0% in 2025, reflecting sustained progress in re-engagement and access to instruction. Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students mirrored this trend, improving from 31.9% to 12.1%, while Students with Disabilities demonstrated the strongest gains, decreasing from 45.7% to 8.7% over the same period.

Most student groups maintained these positive trajectories through 2025. English Learners improved sharply from 2023 to 2024 but rose again to 15.6% in 2025, indicating a need for continued targeted support. Hispanic/Latino students also improved substantially from 2023 but experienced a slight increase from 13.4% to 13.7% in 2025. White students' chronic absenteeism demonstrated consistent and significant improvement, declining from 28.1% to 4.5% by 2025.

Overall, the TK-12 data reflect strong multi-year reductions in chronic absenteeism for nearly all student groups, albeit with continued attention needed for English Learners and Hispanic/Latino students to sustain gains and close remaining gaps.

Multi-Year Chronic Absenteeism (Grades TK-12)
Source: Data Quest Absenteeism Data

	2023	2024	2025
All Students	**31.1%**	**12.5%**	**12.0%**
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	31.9%	12.9%	12.1%
Students with Disabilities	45.7%	11.9%	8.7%
English Learners	40.0%	10.7%	15.6%
Asian	No Data	0.0%	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	32.1%	13.4%	13.7%
White	28.1%	10.0%	4.5%

Synthesis of Performance Trends

Overall, California Dashboard outcomes for Merced Scholars Charter School show improving trends over time, though performance remains below the statewide average for All Student and Student Group averages in several key academic areas.

1. Academic performance (ELA and Math) remains below state averages across all student groups, with ELA showing moderate improvement and math demonstrating incremental gains that still reflect a substantial need for improvement.
2. ELPI, Science, and College/Career Readiness show more positive momentum, including strong gains in English learner progress, improving college and career readiness, and Science outcomes that meet or exceed the statewide results for some student groups.

3. Student group trends generally mirror schoolwide performance, with incremental improvement over time. The Hispanic student group outcomes show inconsistencies in ELA and chronic absenteeism.
4. School climate and engagement indicators are relative strengths, including high graduation rates, very low suspension rates, strong assessment participation overall, and significantly improved, though not fully resolved, chronic absenteeism.

Taken together, these results indicate that while the school is making steady progress and demonstrates strengths in several areas, continued focus on improving core academic outcomes, particularly in mathematics, and addressing student group disparities will be critical for meeting state performance expectations.

Are there serious governance or fiscal concerns that have been properly noticed by the authorizing board, AND has the Charter's corrective action plan been unsuccessful, or are the violations severe enough that the plan is unlikely to be viable? (EC § 47607(e))
No (Governance Only)

MSCS operates as a county-sponsored, locally funded charter authorized by the MCBOE under EC § 47605.6.

Governance Review

As a charter administered by the MCOE, MSCS does not have a separate nonprofit governing board, bylaws, articles of incorporation, or an independent conflict-of-interest code. Instead, the MCBOE serves as the school's governing body, retaining all statutory roles and responsibilities (EC §§ 1040-1047), while the County Superintendent oversees operations and employees. Governance, including policy adoption, Brown Act compliance, public meetings, and oversight, follows existing MCBOE procedures.

The absence of separate governance documents (e.g., standalone bylaws, nonprofit filings, or a school-specific board) is appropriate for a county-sponsored charter, where the authorizer's governing structure and policies govern the school.

Based on cumulative enrollment patterns, attrition rates (including mid-year and inter-year departures disaggregated by student groups), and associated academic performance data as required under EC § 47607(d), does the charter school appear to be serving all pupils who wish to attend?	
Date Board Approved Notice: Not applicable	**Date Notice Delivered:** Not applicable

Yes

In 2025-26, Merced Scholars Charter School continues to serve a socioeconomically similar population to Merced City Elementary and Merced County, with 79.6% of students identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, closely aligned with local rates and well above the state average (63.1%).

Demographic Data Analysis

The school enrolls a lower proportion of English Learners (7.7%) than Merced County and statewide averages. The charter reports no foster youth or migrant education students and serves a slightly lower percentage of homeless youth (0.7%) relative to county and state levels. Students with disabilities remain a comparatively higher proportion of enrollment (15.7%) than district, county, and state averages, indicating a sustained concentration of students requiring special education services. Overall enrollment has fluctuated modestly over time, increasing in prior years before a slight decline to 299 students in 2025-26, with student group patterns remaining generally stable across recent cohorts.

MSCS Schoolwide and Student Group Enrollment Trends

Student Groups	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
English Learners	6.2%	13.0%	7.5%	8.1%	7.5%	7.7%
Foster Youth	1.9%	1.5%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Homeless Youth	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%	2.4%	0.7%
Migrant Education	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Students with Disabilities	14.2%	10.7%	19.2%	15.5%	16.5%	15.7%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	79.0%	82.6%	81.5%	89.2%	79.9%	79.6%
All Students	**162**	**270**	**281**	**297**	**334**	**299**

MSCS 2025-26 Schoolwide and Student Group Enrollment

Groups	Merced Scholars	Merced City Elementary	Merced County	State of California

	2025-26			
English Learners	7.7%	15.4%	20.9%	16.2%
Foster Youth	0.0%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%
Homeless Youth	0.7%	0.5%	2.3%	3.8%
Migrant Education	0.0%	1.8%	2.6%	0.8%
Students with Disabilities	15.7%	11.4%	13.5%	14.8%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	79.6%	78.7%	79.7%	63.1%
All Students	**299**	**11,108**	**58,690**	**5,731,260**

Complaints

No complaints were included in the scope of the current review. The Merced County Office of Education indicates it addresses and resolves complaints in accordance with applicable Merced County Board of Education policies and administrative regulations.

Does the Petition meet the standards and criteria described in EC § 47605, including but not limited to a reasonably comprehensive description of all required elements, any new requirement of charter schools enacted into law after the charter was originally granted or last renewed, and required affirmations, declarations, and assurances?
Yes

Overall, the Merced Scholars Charter School renewal petition is comprehensive and meets the statutory requirements of EC § 47605 by clearly describing the school's educational program and governance and operational structure, and by delineating the respective roles and responsibilities of the charter school, the Merced County Office of Education, and the Merced County Board of Education.

Analysis of Submitted Petition

Certification of Completion

A signed *Certificate of Completion* dated April 12, 2026, was submitted with the Petition.

Required Assurances

The Petition contains the required assurances, except as expressly indicated in the petition elements that are not considered complete or comprehensive. See the *Complete and Comprehensive Petition* section below.

Material Revisions
CCAP did not identify any apparent material revisions; however, the original Petition required extensive updates to meet legal requirements resulting from the implementation of AB 1505, which was signed into law in 2019.

Complete and Comprehensive Petition
The following analysis identifies only those elements of the petition that do ***not*** fully meet the legal requirements of EC § 47605, including areas where additional clarification or statutory specificity is needed.

Element J (10): Suspension and Expulsion Procedures
The petition does **not** include the required explicit, enumerated list distinguishing mandatory offenses from discretionary offenses. While the petition does state that Merced Scholars Charter School, as a locally funded COE charter school, is required to follow Merced County Office of Education Board Policy, this reference alone does not necessarily satisfy the statutory requirement to provide a clear delineation of mandatory versus discretionary offenses within the petition itself.

Miscellaneous Provisions: Impact Statement
The petition does **not** address the potential civil liability effects of the school on its authorizer, as required under EC § 47605(c)(5)(O). Specifically, the petition does not include an impact statement describing how the operation of a locally funded county office of education charter school may affect the Merced County Board of Education in its role as authorizer. This might include, but is not limited to, ADA-related fiscal exposure, civil liability arising from school operations, and the need for any risk-mitigation measures to protect the COE and its governing board.

V. CHARTER PETITION REVIEW COMMITTEE FINDINGS OF FACT

In California, charter school renewal decisions are based on academic performance, fiscal and organizational stability, and compliance with state and federal law. The chartering authority may deny a charter renewal only upon making written findings, setting forth specific facts to support the findings that:

1. Pursuant to EC § 47607.2(b)(3), the Charter School has failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward meeting standards that provide a benefit to the pupils of the school, that closure of the charter school is in the best interest of pupils,

and that its decision provided greater weight to performance on measurements of academic performance.

2. Pursuant to EC § 47607.2(a), either of the following applies for two consecutive years immediately preceding the renewal decision:
    - The charter school has received the two lowest performance levels schoolwide on all the state indicators included in the evaluation rubrics adopted pursuant to EC § 52064.5 for which it receives performance levels; or
    - For all measurements of academic performance, the charter school has received performance levels schoolwide that are the same or lower than the state average and, for a majority of student groups performing statewide below the state average in each respective year, received performance levels that are lower than the state average.

    Notwithstanding these mandatory non-renewal criteria in EC § 47607.2(a), the authorizing agency still may renew such a charter school, but only upon making both of the following written factual findings, specific to the particular petition and supported by specific facts:
    - The charter school is taking meaningful steps to address the underlying cause or causes of its low performance, and those steps are reflected, or will be reflected, in a written plan adopted by the governing body of the charter school; and
    - There is clear and convincing evidence, demonstrated by verified data as defined in subdivision (c), showing either:
        - That the school achieved measurable increases in academic achievement, as defined by at least one year's progress for each year in school; or
        - That strong postsecondary outcomes, as defined by college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates, are equal to those of similar peers.
3. The school is demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition due to substantial fiscal or governance factors, or is not serving all pupils who wish to attend pursuant to requirements outlined in EC § 47607 subdivisions (d) and (e).
4. The submitted petition does not adhere to the standards and criteria described in EC § 47605 and may be denied under subdivision (c), except paragraphs (7) and (8).

The Review Committee has determined that the Merced Scholars Charter School Renewal Petition **likely meets** the minimum Education Code requirements for charter renewal. The review committee provides the following sample options to support the

Merced County Board of Education in its determination to approve or deny the Charter's request for renewal.

Option 1: Middle-Performance Approval
Should the Merced County Board of Education **approve the renewal** of Merced Scholars Charter School for a five-year term from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2031, written findings of fact need not be adopted based on the assignment of the **Middle-Performance Tier**. Minimal concerns (e.g., findings related to policy and charter impact on the authorizer) can be addressed by directing County Office staff to draft specified language into a Memorandum of Understanding between the Charter School and Authorizing Board and incorporate the MOU into the approved charter.

-OR-

Option 2: Middle-Performance Denial
Should the Merced County Board of Education choose to **deny** the renewal of Merced Scholars Charter School, with its assignment of **Middle-Performance Tier**, the Board **must** make written findings, which **must** support at least one of the following:

1. As outlined in EC § 47607.2(b)(3), closure of the charter school is in the best interest of pupils, with greater weight being applied to academic performance measurements. Findings must support that:
    - The charter school has failed to meet, or make sufficient progress toward meeting, standards that provide a benefit to the pupils of the school;
    - Closure of the charter school is in the best interest of pupils; and
    - The Board's decision provided greater weight to performance on academic measurements.

2. The submitted petition does not adhere to the standards and criteria described in EC § 47605 and may be denied under subdivision (c), except paragraphs (7) and (8).

3. The school is demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition due to substantial fiscal or governance factors, or is not serving all pupils who wish to attend pursuant to requirements outlined in EC § 47607 subdivisions (d) and (e). The chartering authority may deny renewal on either of these bases only by making either of the following findings:

    (1) The corrective action proposed by the charter school has been unsuccessful; or

(2) The violations are sufficiently severe and pervasive as to render a corrective action plan unviable.

Based on the allowable reasons for denial, the Merced County Board of Education **could justifiably deny** the renewal petition if it finds that closure is in the best interest of pupils, with greater weight given to academic performance as described in number 1, above. In this event, the Board may cite specific elements of this report or other relevant sources of information to support denial.

VI. ADDITIONAL STATE DATA

State Academic Performance Outcomes

CAASPP ELA Percent of Students that Meet/Exceed Standard

Source: Data Quest CAASPP Test Results

Grade Level	2019	2022*	2023	2024	2025
Grade 3	NA	13.34%	No data	No data	9.09%
Grade 4	NA	14.28%	No data	No data	9.09%
Grade 5	NA	38.89%	35.0%	25.0%	No data
Grade 6	No data	47.62%	23.08%	36.84%	26.32%
Grade 7	17.65%	17.24%	46.16%	40%	25.81%
Grade 8	45.83%	34.38%	29.03%	32.26%	47.82%
Grade 11	52.94%	54.06%	23.53%	48.57%	55.55%
All Grades	41.97%	33.52%	30.15%	35.88%	35.04%

*From the CAASPP Reporting Site-*Due to factors surrounding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, testing participation in 2020–21 varied. Care should be used when interpreting results.*

Local School Comparison ELA Distance from Standard

Source: Data Quest CAASPP Test Results

Year	Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	ECademy Charter at Crane Turlock	**Merced Scholars**
2022	-33.3 points	-13.5 points	-19.5 points	-86.6 points	-22.5 points
2023	-8.2 points	-23.3 points	-20.2 points	-79.6 points	-35.1 points
2024	-16.6 points	-25.6 points	-15.7 points	-63.3 points	-44.5 points
2025	+3.7 points	-25.0 points	-22.2 points	-0.1 points	-33.8 points

Math Percent of Students that Meet/Exceed Standard

Source: Data Quest CAASPP Test Results

Grade Level	2019	2022*	2023	2024	2025
Grade 3	NA	13.34%	No data	No data	9.09%
Grade 4	NA	14.28%	No data	No data	9.09%
Grade 5	NA	38.89%	35.0%	25.0%	No data
Grade 6	No data	47.62%	23.08%	36.84%	26.32%
Grade 7	17.65%	17.24%	46.16%	40%	25.81%
Grade 8	45.83%	34.38%	29.03%	32.26%	47.82%
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All Grades	41.97%	33.52%	30.15%	35.88%	35.04%

*From the CAASPP Reporting Site-*Due to factors surrounding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, testing participation in 2020–21 varied. Care should be used when interpreting results.*

Local School Comparison Math Distance from Standard

Source: Data Quest CAASPP Test Results

Year	Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	ECademy Charter at Crane Turlock	Merced Scholars
2022	-56.5 points	-78.5 points	-74.9 points	-188.5 points	-117.7 points
2023	-46.8 points	-76.4 points	-74.6 points	-182.3 points	-128.9 points
2024	-47.5 points	-85.9 points	-72.4 points	-124.2 points	-134.2 points
2025	-22.6 points	-77 points	-82.1 points	-104.3 points	-116.8 points

Local School Comparison College/Career Indicator

Source: California Dashboard

	2024	2025
Merced Scholars Charter	**21.2%**	**29%**
Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	No data	No data
Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	60.9%	53.4%
Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	37.3%	45.3%
eCademy Charter at Crane Turlock	14.8%	10.5%

State Non-Academic Performance Outcomes

Local School Comparison Graduation Rate

Source: California Dashboard

	2023	2024	2025
Merced Scholars Charter	**100%**	**97%**	96.8%
Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	No data	No data	No data
Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	89.7%	91.8%	95%
Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	82.6%	83.5%	89.6%
eCademy Charter at Crane Turlock	90%	88.9%	94.7%

Local School Comparison Dropout Rate

Source: Data Quest Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate and Outcome Data

	2023	2024	2025
Merced Scholars Charter	**0.0%**	**3.0%**	**3.2%**
Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	No Data	No Data	No Data
Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	10.4%	8.7%	5.2%
Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	17.6%	17.3%	11.1%

eCademy Charter at Crane Turlock	10.0%	11.1%	5.3%

Local School Comparison Suspension Rate

Source: California Dashboard

	2023	2024	2025
Merced Scholars Charter	**0%**	**0%**	**0.5%**
Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	0%	0%	0%
Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	0%	0%	0%
Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	0%	0%	0%
eCademy Charter at Crane Turlock	0%	0.8%	0.3%

Local School Comparison Chronic Absenteeism (Grades TK-8)

Source: California Dashboard

	2023	2024	2025
Merced Scholars	**36.6%**	**16.6%**	**16%**
Mountain Home Charter Yosemite Unified	0%	0%	0.9%
Connecting Waters Charter-Central Valley	1.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Connecting Waters Charter-Waterford	1.8%	1.9%	1.1%
eCademy Charter at Crane Turlock	62.9%	47.0%	24.6%

— MERCED COUNTY —
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Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools
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Merced Scholars Charter School – Financial Analysis of Charter Petition Renewal
June 2026

The Merced Scholars Charter School (MSCS) has two programs within the school, a Dual Language Academy (DLA) and an Independent Study Program. The independent study program has been financially viable and contributes to the financial stability of MSCS. However, the DLA has had insufficient enrollment to cover its expenses. For FY 2025-26 the program will have a $1.9 million deficit. For FY 2026-27, the program is projected to have a $1.7 million deficit. In addition, the program is projecting deficits of more than $1.2 million every year going forward. This assumes that enrollment will grow by 85 students. If enrollment does not grow, the program will have larger deficits. The projections exclude other costs related to future bargaining with labor partners. Therefore, deficits may increase above projections.

The multi-year projection (MYP) for the DLA indicates negative fund balances in 2026-27, 2027-2028, 2028-29, and 2029-30. This creates a substantial doubt that the DLA can continue as a viable program.

Sincerely,

Martin Fregoso
Deputy Superintendent, Business Services