

State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia

Staff Recommendation for the 2014 Petition Cycle August 27, 2014

School:	Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School
Attendance Zone:	Statewide
Grade Levels:	K-12
Staff Recommendation:	SCSC staff recommends that the petition for Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School be denied .

Rationale:

1. The proposed school did not demonstrate that the governing board and school personnel possess adequate governing capacity to operate a charter school that operates as its own Local Education Agency (LEA). The legal and operational requirements of operating an LEA necessitate broad knowledge as well as specialized expertise in a variety of areas. The proposed school governing board, while passionate about education and the school, did not establish its ability to hold school leadership accountable for the implementation of the educational plan and adherence to all legal requirements.
2. The petition did not outline a strategy for the creation and implementation of the proposed school's academic program. The school proposed to utilize a STEM curriculum connected with the school's surrounding industry. While this concept is consistent with a high-quality charter school, the petition and interview did not reveal how the school will create a cohesive educational model aligned to state standards.
3. The proposed school did not have a clear strategy to begin operation by the 2015-2016 school year. Preparing to operate a state charter school is a time-consuming task that requires serious commitment and dedication. Among many obligations the governing board and school leader must complete prior to a school's opening are to establish and manage a budget; renovate facilities; develop each aspect of its instructional program; hire teachers and support staff; establish and implement governing, personnel, and student policies. Any future petition should include a written plan detailing how the school will prepare and allocate responsibility for the opening of the school after executing a charter.
4. The proposed school presented a budget that created financial uncertainty. Many expenses in the budget, most notably special education costs, are underestimated and do not reflect the true cost of operating a state charter school. To strengthen this area in future petitions, the proposed budget should be based only on state funding that would be earned by a state charter school with any additional funding being supported by written and documented evidence of its receipt, and the proposed budget should evidence accurate costs based on the school's educational model.

Link to Petition and

Related Materials: [Click here to view Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School](#)