

**Testimony of Eva Moskowitz,**  
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Success Academy Charter Schools

**Expanding High-Quality Charter Schools Will Not Only Transform the Lives of Millions of Families — It Would Strengthen Our Economy, Close Opportunity Gaps, and Secure America's Future Prosperity**

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

In 2006, I opened one school in Harlem with a simple but radical idea: that all children, regardless of race, income, or zip code, are capable of achieving at the highest academic levels if given access to excellent education. Today, Success Academy has grown into a network of 57 schools, serving more than 22,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade, the vast majority of whom are Black and Hispanic children from low-income households. Their academic performance surpasses that of students in many of New York's wealthiest suburbs.

Our experience offers clear lessons about how we can address some of the most urgent educational and economic challenges facing our nation.

**Success Academy: A Model of Academic and College Success**

At Success Academy, our mission is to ensure that excellence is not reserved for a privileged few, but accessible to all. Our scholars consistently achieve extraordinary results — results that demonstrate what is possible in public education. We accomplish this not by selecting students — admission is through a blind public lottery — but by fundamentally reimagining public education.

**College Success:**

For the eighth consecutive year, 100% of Success Academy graduates have been accepted to four-year colleges, including many of the most selective universities in the country. The majority of our graduates are the first in their families to attend college, and 72% are from low-income families.

At a time when national college enrollment has declined by nearly 15% over the past decade<sup>1</sup>, Success Academy's outcomes offer compelling proof of what is possible. When expectations are high, instruction is rigorous, and rich in arts and athletics, all children can succeed.

**Academic Excellence:**

Success Academy students consistently outperform their city, state, and national peers.

- On grade 3–8 state exams, SA Black and Hispanic students passed both math and reading exams at more than twice the rate of their city and state peers.

- Success Academy middle school students take the state's high school Regents exams. In 2024, 99.7% passed the Algebra I exam; 98.4% passed the English Language Arts exam; 95.6% passed the Global History II exam; and 94.4% passed the Living Environment exam.
- By high school graduation, 95% of SA students have passed at least one Advanced Placement exam, compared to the national average of 22.6% and 32.8% in Massachusetts, the highest-ranked state<sup>2</sup>.

A major national study by Stanford University's Center for Research on Educational Outcomes (CREDO) found that, on average, U.S. charter school students gain the equivalent of an extra 16 days of learning in reading and six extra days in math compared to similar district school students<sup>3</sup>. Success Academy scholars, however, gained the equivalent of 206 additional days of learning in math and 107 additional days in reading every year<sup>3</sup> — equivalent to more than a full additional year of academic growth each year<sup>2</sup>.

## **The K–12 Crisis: American Students Are Falling Behind**

Unfortunately, most American K–12 schools are not achieving these outcomes.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows catastrophic declines in student achievement. Among 13-year-olds, the average reading score dropped by 4 points compared to 2020, and the average mathematics score dropped by 9 points<sup>4</sup>. Only 30% of fourth-grade students performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level in reading, and only 39% in mathematics<sup>4</sup>.

International comparisons highlight even more troubling trends. In the latest Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, American 15-year-olds ranked 36th in math and 13th in reading among 79 nations<sup>5</sup>. In terms of college attainment, the United States — once the world leader — has fallen to ninth place among developed nations<sup>6</sup>.

Despite significant increases in education spending, most traditional public schools — and even many charter schools — are not sufficiently rigorous. Far too few schools prepare students for the academic and professional challenges of the 21st-century economy.

This represents a national emergency. If we do not act decisively to expand the supply of high quality schools, the consequences will be felt for generations.

## **National Stakes: Education and America's Growing Labor Shortage**

The need to improve K–12 education is not just a matter of fairness or opportunity; it is an economic imperative.

Today, the United States faces a serious and growing labor shortage. An increasing share of jobs require at least a bachelor's degree or substantial post-secondary training<sup>7</sup>. Yet college enrollment is falling, and too few students are completing degrees<sup>8</sup>.

**Mismatch in Education and Skills:**

More employers require college credentials, but fewer young people are earning them<sup>8</sup>.

**Impact on Key Sectors:**

Critical fields such as STEM, healthcare, and education are experiencing severe shortages of skilled workers<sup>9</sup>. In the U.S., STEM degrees constitute approximately 20% of all degrees awarded, whereas in countries like China and India, the share exceeds 40%<sup>9</sup>.

**Potential for Economic Decline:**

Absent a better-educated workforce, the United States risks declining innovation, competitiveness, and standard of living<sup>10</sup>.

The source of the crisis is clear: we are not preparing enough young people in K–12 schools for success in higher education or the workforce. Success Academy shows that when public schools set ambitious goals and provide rigorous education, students from all backgrounds can excel — and in doing so, help build a stronger America.

**Overwhelming Demand: Families Want Better Options**

The success of our students has not gone unnoticed by families.

For the 2024–2025 school year alone, 28,000 families applied for just 3,197 available seats at Success Academy<sup>2</sup> — nearly nine applicants for every seat.

Demand for high-quality charter schools is strong across the country:

- In Texas, approximately 73,813 students were on charter school waitlists.<sup>11</sup>
- In Massachusetts, 17,380 students were on waitlists for 2024–2025.<sup>11</sup>
- In North Carolina, over 85,000 students were on waitlists for public charter schools.<sup>11</sup>

Every one of those families shares a fundamental and urgent need: for their child to have access to a school where academic excellence is the norm, not the exception. Every child left waiting represents a missed opportunity — not only for that child, but for our nation.

**A Solution: Expand High-Quality Charter Schools**

High-quality charter schools have demonstrated the potential to significantly improve student achievement, especially among disadvantaged children.

However, in communities across the country, the demand for seats in excellent charter schools far exceeds the supply. One major barrier to the creation of additional charter schools is the high one-time start-up cost of opening new schools. That is why I strongly support the High-Quality Charter Schools Act (HQCSA) now before Congress. The HQCSA, which is championed by leaders of this committee and the Ways & Means Committee, would provide a 75% federal tax credit for charitable contributions toward the start-up costs of nonprofit charter school organizations with a proven track record of excellence. This powerful incentive would unleash billions of dollars in new philanthropic investment, significantly expanding the number of high-quality schools available to families.

This proposal would complement other proposals to advance school choice, including the much-needed Educational Choice for Children Act. The legislation would also ensure fiscal accountability, requiring independent audits and compliance reviews.

Parents urgently need greater access to high-quality public and private education options. The potential impact is enormous. Currently, only 6% of American schoolchildren attend charter schools. The HQCSA could triple that to 18%, giving up to 6 million more students access to excellent public education.

This would not only transform the lives of millions of families, strengthen our economy, close opportunity gaps, and secure America's future prosperity.

Thank you.

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## Footnotes

1. "Undergraduate Enrollment Continues to Decline," National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2024.
2. "AP Program Results: Class of 2024," College Board Report, 2024
3. "National Charter School Study III," CREDO at Stanford University, 2023.
4. "NAEP Long-Term Trend Results: 2022," National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
5. "PISA 2022 Results," Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
6. "Education at a Glance: 2023," OECD Indicators.
7. "The Emerging Skills Gap," Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2024.
8. "Trends in College Enrollment," National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2023.
9. "Healthcare Workforce Shortages," American Hospital Association, 2023; "Teacher Shortage Data," U.S. Department of Education, 2024; "Manufacturing Institute Workforce Report," 2024.
10. "The Future of Work in America," McKinsey Global Institute, 2023.
11. Texas Education Agency; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Carolina Journal reports, 2024.