

August 15, 2012

New York State Education Dept. Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue, Room 471 EBA  
Albany, New York 12234

Re: Letter of Intent for Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School for Health and Legal Careers

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter shall serve as official notification that the founding group of the Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School for Health and Legal Careers (Wright Prep) intends to file an application to open a charter school as part of the New York State Education Department's June 2012 RFP cycle.

**I. Applicant Information**

**Lead Applicant**

Name: James Wright, Sr.

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Phone: 585-454-4175

Cell: [REDACTED]

Email: [jameswright41@aol.com](mailto:jameswright41@aol.com)

**Media Contact**

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**Founding Group**

James Wright, Sr. is the lead applicant for the Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School for Health and Legal Careers (Wright Prep). Wright is a long-standing leader in the Rochester community. He is the head of the New Progressive Church in Rochester and will be a member of Wright Prep's Board of Trustees.

**Board of Trustees**

Name	Relevant Experience/Skills and Role in Founding Group	Proposed Role in School
1. Rev. James Wright	- Non-profit executive management experience - Recognized long-standing community leader	Board chairman

2. Patricia Larke	- Coordinates the work of staff members across multiple Congressional offices - Experience with public policy work and governing logistics	Board member
3. Deral Givens	- Legal background and attorney for Legal Aid Society - Former Rochester Police Officer with unique perspective on the role of education in the city's health	Board member
4. Donald Ginsberg	- Retired Rochester City School District Principal and board member for various community health agencies	Board member
5. Grace Williamson	- Deep background in education, with experiencing teaching, consulting and leading for districts, schools, and NYSED	Board member
6. Betsy Balzano, Ph.D.	- Distinguished professor of graduate and undergraduate teacher education at SUNY College at Brockport	Board member
7. Yolanda Wooten	- Forty years of experience as a teacher and tutor of Mathematics	Board member
8. Anthony Bradley	- Background in project management, engineering, and quality assurance design	Board member

Wright Prep's founding Board of Trustees is steeped with the experience, passion, community relationships, and knowledge necessary for the successful establishment and sustained operation of a highly effective charter school. The eight current Wright Prep board members are active members of the Rochester community and represent the diversity of the community. One of the Board members has served as a secondary school principal, two as School Administrators as well as Directors of Student Teaching at leading universities. In addition, one is a retired math instructor, while another is a current practicing attorney. Two Board Members are community leaders, and one as a retired educator now serving as a religious/community leader.

Not only are the Board Members active participants in the Rochester community, but they are also highly educated with an intense passion for education. One member has earned a doctorate in education while four others have master's degrees in education and beyond. Other degrees include Business Management and Law. Several have worked as college professors, teachers, and one has been a coordinator for a government agency. Some have extensive experience in budget matters for the Rochester City School District. Board members have experience in and demonstrated success in grant-writing, fundraising, program management, marketing and recruitment, counseling youth, professional development, school-community partnerships, mentoring programs, college/university partnerships, community development, enrollment management, strategic planning, emergency management, and school operations.

**Replication/Network Information**

The school is not part of a larger network and is not replicating a specific existing school model.

### **Proposal History**

The Wright Prep founding group submitted proposals to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute in August 2010 and January 2012. Since its initial proposal, the Wright Prep founders have taken significant time to reflect, plan, research and develop and more rigorous and focused approach. The founders restructured the Board of Trustees' membership and function since the initial application as well. The group has sought out and recruited an entirely new Board of Trustees with outstanding experience in the education field, community leadership, legal and medical services industries. In addition, the Board retained the services of a seasoned charter school design consultant to ensure the development of a thorough plan for the school.

## **II. Proposed Charter School Information**

### **Proposed School Name**

Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School for Health and Legal Careers

### **Proposed School Location**

The school will be located within the Rochester City School District.

### **Planned Grades and Enrollment**

The school proposes to enroll 150 students in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in year one. The school proposes to add one grade level of 75 students each and reach full scale with 450 students in grades 7-12 in year five.

### **Management and/or Partner Organization**

The school does not plan to be associated with a management or partner organization.

### **School Mission**

The mission of the Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School for Health and Legal Careers (Wright Prep) is to provide students with a rigorous curriculum that will foster the highest levels of academic success and provide preparation for careers in the health and legal fields. Through attention to individual learning and relationship building it is our mission to ensure that all Wright Prep students successfully pass standardized aptitude assessments, graduate from high school, and find success in college and career.

### **School Overview**

Wright Prep will prepare students in grades 7 through 12 for success in college and specifically for careers in the health and legal fields. This is no small task. It will require a longer school day (approximately 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM, plus after school tutorials three days per week) and a longer school year (195 days plus weekly Saturday School sessions and a month-long summer program) with greater emphasis on language arts, science and math. Wright Prep expects to recruit a student population similar to that in the Rochester City School District. This makes it likely that some students will enter the school behind grade level academically. Wright Prep will seek to address this issue from the moment they enter the school.

Wright Prep is committed to designing and implementing innovative curricula and strategies specifically designed to meet the needs and raise the expectations for its target student population. Wright Prep's success will be based on an educational approach that defies stereotypes and prepares students for the workplace as well as for college and beyond. The school's focus in preparing students for the workplace is no accident. Upon entering the high school level grades, Wright Prep students will choose health or legal tracks for their academic focus. Not only do these fields offer the means for providing a life filled with opportunity, they also happen to be in great demand, particularly in Rochester. According to the latest census data, nearly one-third of employed citizens of Monroe County work in the highly skilled fields of health care or law.

While all of the school's students will complete content areas required for a NYS Regents diploma, Wright Prep's high school students will pursue additional specialized studies in their specific health or legal fields, including honors and advanced placement courses. The school will leverage partnerships with local colleges, health agencies and legal institutions to ensure students are exposed to career development both inside and outside of the school. Preparing students for success in college and the professional world beyond is the task to which Wright Prep is deeply committed.

### **III. Enrollment and Retention Targets and Recruitment**

The founders of Wright Prep are aware of the new benchmarks for charter school student enrollment and retention and plan to serve a student population that reflects the Rochester City School District in all respects, particularly in terms of students with disabilities, English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged families. With the experience and deep community ties of its founding group, Wright Prep has identified a student recruitment strategy with an established record of success. The school has already begun and will continue to build relationships with churches, community organizations, shelters, public advocates, health providers, educators, and other service providers throughout the city to build parent interest. Wright Prep has sought and received district support and will take full advantage of opportunities to present to PTAs within the RCSD, participate in district-wide school choice fairs, and coordinate with the RCSD's school selection office to disseminate information about the School.

Wright Prep is committed to delivering the school's full slate of services to students with disabilities in a manner as integrated and unrestrictive as is permissible based on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) determined by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of residence and all applicable federal laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and any other rights enforced by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Wright Prep will also comply with all New York State policies and regulations

Targeted marketing, including radio and cable television advertisements, and direct mail promotional materials, will also play a critical role in recruiting students within the target populations. Wright Prep will also work diligently to ensure that school informational materials are available in libraries, shops, recreation centers, restaurants, and other community gathering

places throughout Rochester's neighborhoods, in both English and Spanish. (and other languages where relevant and possible).

Wright Prep will adhere to all applicable State and Federal regulations in recruiting and enrolling students. Furthermore, Wright Prep will successfully adopt the policies, protocols, and procedures around admissions and enrollment (including the admissions lottery) identified by the Board of Regents.

#### **IV. Public Outreach and Community Support**

The Wright Prep founding team has been working for over a year on a comprehensive outreach initiative to gather input from and build awareness among community leaders, parents, students, local organizations, elected officials, and the Rochester City School District.

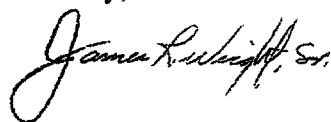
Wright Prep's founding team held an initial informational meeting for community members on January 11, 2011, which was attended by over 60 people. On May 9, 2012, Wright Prep's founders held an additional informational meeting to gather community input and update interested parents on the school's design. Participants were provided information about the school, met board members, and the founding team sought verbal and written input regarding the educational needs of local students. Sign-in lists, a summary of the meetings, and samples of completed questionnaires are attached as Attachment A.

In the months following the initial informational meeting, Wright Prep's founders continued disseminating information, gathering feedback, and building support. A petition of community support for the school was circulated and generated over 950 signatures. A copy of the petition is attached as Attachment B.

Wright Prep has been working with the Rochester City School District and keeping district leaders informed of the school's developing plan. Wright Prep is aware of the District-Charter Compact agreement sponsored by the Gates Foundation and has expressed its intention to sign onto the agreement upon charter approval. A letter of support from the Rochester City School District is attached in Attachment C. Also included as part of Attachment C are letters of support and input from various community leaders and relevant professional organizations, including Mayor Thomas Richards, NYS Assemblyman David Gantt, NYS Senator Joseph Robach, Rochester City Council members, Monroe County Medical Society, Rochester Black Bar Association, Rochester Mentors, and others.

We look forward to working with the NYS Education Department as the RFP process progresses. Please do not hesitate to let us know if there is any further information required.

Sincerely,



James R. Wright, Sr.

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**COMMUNITY MEETING MATERIALS**

An Informational Meeting regarding the proposed Mary L. Wright Charter School for Health & Legal Careers was held on Wednesday, May 9, 2012, at 7PM at the New Progressive Cathedral Church of God in Christ (384 Chili Avenue, Rochester, NY 14611). The purpose of this meeting was to inform the community of the proposed charter school as well as to receive some feedback from the community regarding the school. There were approximately thirty-five (35) individuals present at this meeting. A general overview of the proposed school was discussed, the proposed mission statement was read, all MLW Board Members present were introduced, and questionnaires were distributed. Questionnaires were collected at the end of the meeting. In addition to the questions listed on the questionnaire, the following questions/topics were addressed:

- Board Member Deral Givens presented information regarding “The Focus” of the school. The focus of studies will include introducing students to various legal and medical careers (including but not limited to: attorneys, judges, clerks, parole officers, doctors, nurses, and medical support staff). Students will also have mentors.
- Board Member Yolanda Wooten presented information regarding “Enrollment & Curriculum”. The primary objectives will include the following:
  1. Introduce students to various careers early in their tenure at Mary L. Wright Prep.
  2. Develop and implement individual learning plans.
  3. Provide personal development enhancement courses.
  4. In grades 7 & 8 introduce students to the fields of health & legal services and jobs that are available.
  5. In grades 9 & 10 students engage in more exploration of fields and do research in possible fields of study.
  6. In grades 11 & 12 students participate in various internships/apprenticeships.
  7. The curriculum for MLW Prep will be data driven with the goal of preparing students to attend college.
  8. There will be a maximum of twenty-five (25) students per classroom.
  9. There will be pre-enrollment testing as well as diagnostic testing throughout the school year.
  10. MLW Prep is designed for all students including those with disabilities, gifted, and those without English as their primary language.
- Board Member Patricia Larke presented a list of current community supporters. That list included: Mayor Tom Richards, Senator Robach, City Council President Lovely Warren, City Councilmember Adam McFadden, State Assemblyman David Gantt, and Superintendent of Rochester City School District Bolgen Vargas.
- Additional comments:
  1. There will be strong emphasis placed on excellence and parental involvement.
  2. Uniforms will be worn by all students.
  3. MLW Prep will have a goal of 100% graduation rate.

Questions/ Responses from the audience:

- 1. At some point (preferably during the initial orientation) will the importance of staying out of legal trouble be discussed with the students? Will it be made to clear to students that getting involved in legal troubles as youth could affect their ability to successfully enter into certain legal and medical fields?**

**RESPONSE:** Yes, the importance of staying free and clear from legal issues will be discussed with students and parents.

- 2. What will be the selection process for admission? How will students be “weeded-out”?**

**RESPONSE:** The admissions committee will not be allowed to “weed-out” students. Program expectations can be made high and clear for continued participation in the program. If expectations are not met then a student can no longer be a participant in the educational program. If the MLW Prep is to be successful it will take the hard work and determination of teachers, students and parents. Selecting student via a lottery system was mentioned.

- 3. What is the target date for the MLW Prep school to open?**

**RESPONSE:** September of 2013.

Additional comments/topics to consider:

- Solicit support from area fraternities/sororities to partner with MLW Prep as mentors.
- Have some system in place to help address students’ home life issues.
- Make sure students are prepared for life after graduation (For example: be able to write a resume, read, balance a checkbook, etc.)
- How will staff be selected? Do charter schools have any flexibility in how they select and train teachers?
- Include green technology in the curriculum.
- Have curriculum strong in math and sciences.
- Consider moving past the traditional school day to include Saturday classes and extended calendar (summer school)



**Proposed  
Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter  
School for  
Health & Legal Careers  
Informational Meeting  
7PM  
Wednesday, January 19th  
New Progressive Cathedral COGIC  
384 Chili Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14611**



- Come and find out more information about this unique proposed charter school
- Come and share your ideas-We want to hear from you!



For more information please call: (585) 454-4175



Proposed Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School

For

Health & Legal Careers

## INFORMATIONAL MEETING

## SIGN-IN SHEET

Wednesday, January 19, 2011-7PM

New Progressive Cathedral COGiC-384 Chili Avenue Rochester, NY

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Proposed Mary L. Wright Preparatory Charter School

For

Health & Legal Careers

## INFORMATIONAL MEETING

## SIGN-IN SHEET

Wednesday, January 19, 2011-7PM

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