



**NEW JERSEY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
27TH DISTRICT**

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY

HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, VICE CHAIR

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EDUCATION

ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN F. MCKEON

DEPUTY SPEAKER

ENVIRONMENT & SOLID WASTE, CHAIRMAN

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND INSURANCE

APPROPRIATIONS

January 2, 2012

Dear Neighbor,

We are writing to update you on an application being considered by the New Jersey Department of Education to authorize the Hua Mei Charter School – a K-5 Mandarin language “immersion” school. If approved, the charter would be located in Maplewood and draw students from the South Orange/Maplewood and West Orange school districts.

The school boards for both districts have reviewed the application, as required by statute, and both have expressed strong opposition to the Acting Commissioner of Education. Their reasoning is well founded and we concur with their analyses. The charter school concept was designed to promote “laboratories for innovation.” Where traditional schools are failing to meet the needs of their students, it may be appropriate to allocate taxpayer dollars to innovative educational models that can be developed in a charter school setting and replicated in traditional public schools after success has been demonstrated.

The Hua Mei application is not in accordance with this model. Instead, the proposal would divert funding from successful public schools to a charter school that, by its design, cannot be replicated in a traditional public school setting. It also duplicates a highly successful Mandarin language program in the West Orange school system which has recently been expanded to offer Advanced Placement.

We know the tremendous budget difficulties that our school boards are facing. Now is not the time to divert funding from our public schools by creating boutique charter schools in non-failing districts. As the parents of six children who received outstanding public educations in South Orange/Maplewood and West Orange, we also understand that decisions affecting our school budgets should be made locally. That is why we are both proud sponsors of Assembly bill 3852, which would require voter approval at the annual school election or by the local school board before a charter school can be approved or expanded.

You can be assured that we will continue to fight for local control of education spending in our successful school districts. Please feel free to contact our district offices if you would like additional information. We wish you the very best for a happy and healthy 2012!

Very truly yours,

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

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