

ILEA July 23, 2025 – Online Public Comment

<p>(Alicia Hervey, Founder and Executive Director, The Path School), (Darius Adamson, Executive Director, United Schools of Indianapolis), (Emily Masengale, CEO, Christel House Indianapolis), (Edward Rangel, CEO, Adelante Schools), (Katie Dulay, Executive Director, Neighborhood Charter Network), (Dr. Mariama Shaheed, Founder and Head of School, Global Preparatory Academy), (Janet McNeal, President, Herron Classical Schools), (David Spencer, Executive Director, KIPP Indy Public Schools), (Morrise Harbour, Founder and CEO, Liberty Grove Schools), (Earl Martin Phalen, Founder and CEO, Phalen Leadership Academies), (Kimberly Neal, Founder and Executive Director, Believe Schools), (Sajan George, Board Chair, Matchbook Learning Schools of Indiana), (Cody Stipes, CEO, Cold Spring School)</p>	<p>July 21, 2025</p> <p>Indianapolis Local Education Alliance c/o City of Indianapolis Office of Mayor Joe Hogsett 200 E. Washington Street Indianapolis, IN 46204</p> <p>Dear Members of the Indianapolis Local Education Alliance,</p> <p>As leaders of the 25 Innovation Network charter schools, we are excited about the opportunity the Indianapolis Local Education Alliance (ILEA) has to reimagine our city's public education resources and systems. Effective facility management is essential for the sustainability of our district. Since the ILEA is tasked with developing a plan for shared facility use, we want to share our collective position and current circumstances to aid your decision-making.</p> <p>We are proud to lead Innovation Network Schools, a nationally unique model that has consistently increased enrollment and academic achievement within Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). This proven model, built on a charter-district partnership, currently serves over 13,000 students, accounting for 42% of the district's enrollment. Among the 30 schools in the IPS innovation network, 42% of our students are Black, 39% are Latino, and 72% qualify for federal free or reduced-price meals.</p> <p>The Indianapolis education system has undergone significant change in a short period, partly due to the growth of more options and families exercising their right to choose the schools that best meet their needs. The ILEA is well-positioned to make recommendations that protect family and student choice while ensuring the quality and sustainability of all types of public schools.</p> <p>Our facilities are among the most heavily used in</p>
---	--

	<p>the district. If needed, we can provide this analysis to the ILEA using publicly available data from the Rebuilding Stronger planning phase. IPS has met with many of us to discuss the possibility of transferring ownership of our facility to us in the near future, recognizing that this change would help streamline central office operations and reduce ongoing facility costs. This commitment has been documented in several of our current innovation agreements.</p> <p>The language states that “IPS will develop, no later than December 31, 2025, minimum criteria for eligibility that Operator must meet to be considered for such a transfer. If Operator meets the eligibility criteria, IPS and Operator will engage in good faith discussions for a potential sale or transfer of the Facility to Operator. The potential sale or transfer must be memorialized by the Parties in a separate Facilities Agreement on or before June 30, 2026.”</p> <p>If IPS transferred ownership of our facilities to us based on their in-kind estimates, it would save the district over \$37.5 million annually. Those of us with this language in our agreements plan to continue good-faith discussions with the district once we receive the eligibility criteria. We request that IPS provide the ILEA with these estimates. We ask the ILEA to consider these plans when making recommendations for future facility planning.</p> <p>For those of us ready to pursue this option, owning facilities presents exciting opportunities for our school communities. Those already owning their buildings have experienced the benefits of this kind of independence. Having complete control over the space where our educators teach, students learn, and families connect would benefit both the district and the city as a whole.</p> <p>We recognize that our schools are part of a larger system and are pleased to see that the ILEA is responsible for conducting a facilities assessment of all IPS and independent charter schools. Regarding the assessment, we all ask:</p>
--	--

	<p>1. For facilities assessments to be conducted by experts who understand the unique education landscape in our city.</p> <p>2. For full results of this assessment be made public.</p> <p>3. The public report includes all facts related to facility management, such as deferred maintenance amounts and operating costs, including custodial services, utilities, and regular grounds maintenance.</p> <p>Another opportunity for district-charter facility collaboration could be the independent facility authority created by the legislature in HEA 1515. This authority may oversee facilities for public school buildings within IPS, allowing leaders to focus more on academics while maintaining a level of control over their facilities that may not have been possible before.</p> <p>While we acknowledge that the ILEA members are fully committed to finding solutions based on community needs, we also see that innovation and charter school leadership are not formally represented in the Alliance. Therefore, we hope the ILEA can identify concrete ways to engage the charter and innovation network community, which serves most public school students within IPS boundaries. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further with the ILEA to provide additional context on this complex matter.</p> <p>It is our privilege to lead schools in Indianapolis. Our students and families represent the full spectrum of racial and economic diversity in our city. Although we serve different neighborhoods and populations, we all share the goal of ensuring the students we serve are fully prepared to lead empowered, fulfilling lives. As innovation network schools, we are proud to be part of the IPS family and look forward to systemic changes that will help us contribute to the district even more effectively.</p> <p>Thank you for your commitment to our community through your service on the ILEA.</p>
--	---

	Respectfully
Cristal Salgado	<p>My name is Cristal Salgado and I am here today to share my story about transportation needs within Indianapolis. I am a single mom with two children. When my oldest son was in the third grade, he started struggling academically. Since I didn't think he was getting what he needed at his school, I decided to change his school, and we have continued to seek the right fit for him ever since. We did find a school that was meeting the needs of my son. The school had less students compared to the school he attends now. He was comfortable in his learning environment, and y he told me at this school, which did happen to be a public charter school, he felt more focused. Unfortunately, due to lack of transportation, I couldn't keep him at this school. Now, as a mom, I am struggling to find the right fit for him AGAIN. I feel like I am losing my son, and I just want to have the option to put him in the right environment. Please listen to my story and consider making adequate changes to include charter schools to have transportation as well</p>
Flor Maldonado	<p>My name is Flor Maldonado, and I am here today as a proud Latina mother and a concerned member of our Indianapolis community. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak. I carry with me not only my own experience but also the voice and testimony of so many families—like Vilma's—who are often unheard, yet deeply impacted by the decisions you make. Let me tell you about my son, Diego. Diego entered high school full of hope. But as a freshman, he didn't have access to a guidance counselor to help him plan, guide, or even understand the path he needed to succeed. That critical support was missing. Now, as a junior, he's being asked to make up classes and catch up—just to be able to graduate. And while he's working hard, the system has failed him. He was never given a fair chance. And he is not alone. Too many Latino students are quietly falling behind. Not because they aren't smart. Not because they aren't trying. But because the structures that are supposed to support them—simply don't. I'm</p>

	<p>here tonight to ask you to be bold. To be fair. And to be just. We want transparency. We want strong and equal accountability for every school. And we want safe and reliable transportation – offered by every school. And we want every child—no matter their background, their ZIP code, or the language spoken at home—to have a real opportunity to succeed.</p>
Vilma Hernandez	<p>My name is Vilma, and I am here today as a Latina mother concerned about the future of our children. I am here to ask for something simple: Please, don't forget about us. Latino students face many barriers. And too often, they are the last to receive the help they need. We are asking for all schools to be held to the same standards and the same accountability, no matter who runs them. We also need safe and accessible transportation for every student. Transportation should not be a barrier to education. I've seen this in my own family. My son has had to move forward without proper support or guidance, and now he's struggling to catch up. Where was the help when he needed it most? We want fairness. We want equity. And we want to be heard.</p>