

Pedro A. Rivera
Secretary of Education
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

August 5, 2019

Dear Secretary Rivera,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools to bring to your attention a disturbing development in the Pottsville Area School District.

The District recently sent a mailing to parents of charter school students in the Pottsville Area School District advertising the District's Tide Virtual Campus. The reverse side of the postcard states: "Enroll in Tide Virtual Campus and receive a \$100 gift card*". The small print accompanying this statement indicates: "The Tide Virtual Campus gift card may be used on educational items such [sic] books, school supplies, tutoring, or educational field trips. Only students currently enrolled in Gillingham Charter School are eligible for this promotion and must remain active in Tide Virtual Campus from August 26, 2019 through January 15, 2020."

A copy of this mailing is enclosed with this letter.

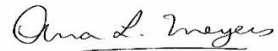
It appears that this mailing was sent to more than just parents of students at Gillingham Charter School. Other parents residing in the District whose children are enrolled in cyber charter schools have also received the mailing.

The Coalition believes that the District's gift card program is an improper use of public funds. Money that is collected to support the education of students should not be spent on gift cards that will be used to bribe parents into changing schools. It is also shocking that the District has apparently decided to discriminate against its own students. Judging by the description in the mailing, if a student who is already enrolled in the Pottsville Area School District decides to enroll in the Tide Virtual Campus, his or her parents will not receive a gift card. But the parents of a student enrolled in a charter school would.

The purpose of this gift card program is obvious: the District is attempting to limit enrollment in charter schools. The Coalition supports giving parents a choice in public education. But the decision of a parent about which school his or her child should attend should be based on what is best for the child, not which school offers the best gift cards. If the District wants to give parents a reason to consider sending their children back to the District, it should spend the money that it is wasting on gift cards on its education program.

The Coalition respectfully requests that you take action to put an end to this improper gift card program before any more public money is wasted.

Sincerely,



Ana Meyers
Executive Director

- cc. The Honorable Pedro Rivera, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education
- The Honorable Joseph Scarnati, Senate President Pro Tempore
- The Honorable Jake Corman, Senate Majority Leader
- The Honorable Jay Costa, Senate Minority Leader
- The Honorable Patrick Browne, Majority Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Vincent Hughes, Minority Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Majority Chairman, Senate Education Committee
- The Honorable Andrew Dinniman, Minority Chairman, Senate Education Committee
- The Honorable Mike Turzai, Speaker of the House
- The Honorable Bryan Cutler, House Majority Leader
- The Honorable Frank Dermody, House Minority Leader
- The Honorable Stan Saylor, Majority Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Matthew Bradford, Minority Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
- The Honorable Curt Sonney, Majority Chairman, House Education Committee
- The Honorable James Roebuck, Minority Chairman, House Education Committee