

March 24, 2026

## **STAFF REPORT, FINDINGS OF FACT, AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CHARTER PETITION RENEWAL**

On January 9, 2026, Northern United - Humboldt Charter (“NUHC”), a non-classroom based charter school serving grades TK-12 with a current enrollment of roughly 330 students, submitted a renewal petition to the Humboldt County Office of Education (“HCOE”). If approved, the request would renew the charter term for the period from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031 and allow NUHC to continue to operate a non-classroom based charter school.

In compliance with Education Code (“EC”) § 47605(b), HCOE held a public hearing on February 11, 2026 to gauge support for the renewal petition and to hear from the petitioners. HCOE will conduct a second public hearing and render its decision on the request for renewal on April 8, 2026. This staff report was published on March 24, 2026, 15 days before that hearing.

The findings of fact and recommendations below represent HCOE’s recommendation to the Board to renew the charter. HCOE also recommends that the Board require HCOE and NUHC to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) prior to June 1, 2026.

### **BACKGROUND**

NUHC was first authorized in 1998 as Mattole Valley Charter School by Mattole Unified School District, and was founded to provide a combination of parent involved independent study and learning center based instruction with a credentialed teacher overseeing the individual educational plan of each student. NUHC was authorized by HCOE as a countywide benefit charter school in 2018. State accountability systems were interrupted during the pandemic. As a result, Assembly Bill (AB) 130 provided charter schools with automatic extensions because of the interruption in publicly reported data.

### **LEGAL STANDARD**

Pursuant to EC § 47607, charter renewals are governed by the same standards and criteria that govern initial charter petitions, as well as the standards and criteria that are unique to the renewal process, where a track record of the charter school exists for review<sup>1</sup>.

Specifically, a charter authorizer must review the renewal petition for compliance with EC § 47605, including whether the petition contains 15 required petition elements. In addition, the charter authorizer must review the school performance record of the charter school using the criteria set out in EC § 47607 and EC § 47607.2. We discuss each set of legal criteria in more detail below.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sarconline.org/public/summary/12101240134163/2023-2024>

- ***Legal Criteria for Renewal under Education Code § 47605***

Pursuant to EC § 47607, a charter renewal petition must meet the requirements of EC § 47605. Thus, a charter authorizer must review a renewal petition to determine the following:

1. Whether the charter school presents a sound educational program;
2. Whether the charter school is likely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition;
3. Whether the petition contains a “clear, unequivocal” affirmation of each of the conditions described in EC § 47605(e)<sup>2</sup>;
4. Whether the petition contains “reasonably comprehensive descriptions” of all of the 15 elements required in a petition pursuant to EC § 47605(c).

Charter renewal petitions must also contain a reasonably comprehensive description of any new requirement of charter schools enacted into law after the charter was originally granted or last renewed. See 5 CCR 11967.5.1 (providing the criteria to be used by the State Board of Education (“SBE”) in reviewing charter petitions). Pursuant to EC § 47605, 47607, and 47607.2, a board that denies a charter renewal petition must make written findings to support any of the grounds listed under EC § 47605.

- ***Legal Criteria for Renewal of NUHC as a “Middle-Performing” Charter School under Education Code 47607.2.***

Pursuant to legislation passed in 2020 (AB 1505), the California Department of Education (“CDE”) began to classify all charter schools into three renewal “tiers” – high, middle, and low – based upon the charter school’s results on the California School Dashboard. See EC §§ 47607 and 47607.2. The law creates a presumption that the renewal of a high-performing charter school will be granted; that the renewal of a low-performing charter school will be denied; and, as to a middle-performing charter school, a charter authorizer “may” grant renewal after considering certain renewal criteria.

Because NUHC has been classified by CDE as a “middle tier” charter school<sup>3</sup>, we turn our attention specifically to the renewal criteria that applies to “middle tier” charter schools pursuant to EC § 47607.2.

As to a “middle tier” charter school, the charter authorizer must (1) consider the schoolwide performance and performance of all student groups served by the charter school on both the state and local indicators on the California School Dashboard; and (2)

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<sup>2</sup> See 5 CCR 11967.5.1 (providing the criteria to be used by the State Board of Education (“SBE”) in reviewing charter petitions).

<sup>3</sup> The list of charter schools and their corresponding performance categories is published by CDE and is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/performcategory.asp>

give “greater weight” to performance on measurements of academic performance in determining whether to grant a charter renewal. Further, a charter authorizer must consider “clear and convincing evidence” showing either of the following: (1) the school achieved measurable increases in academic achievement, as defined by at least one year's progress for each year in school; or (2) strong postsecondary outcomes, as defined by college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates equal to similar peers<sup>4</sup>. Education Code 47607.2.

In addition, a charter authorizer may only deny renewal of a charter school upon making the following written findings setting forth specific facts to support the findings (Education Code 47607.2(b)(3)):

- o That the charter school has failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward meeting standards that provide a benefit to the pupils of the school,
- o That closure of the charter school is in the best interest of pupils; and
- o That its decision provided greater weight to performance on measurements of academic performance.

### **Findings of Fact**

Our attention now turns to the application of the legal criteria set out above to the specific renewal petition of NUHC. As explained in more detail below, staff recommends that the Board grant the request to renew NUHC’s charter petition for a term of five years from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031 conditioned upon NUHC executing a Memorandum of Understanding by June 1, 2026.

#### **School Performance**

NUHC has been identified by CDE as a middle-performing charter school. Thus, HCOE “may” grant renewal after considering the schoolwide performance and performance of all student groups served by the charter school on the state and local indicators. If NUHC has submitted “clear and convincing evidence” of measurable increases in academic achievement or strong postsecondary outcomes, then HCOE must also consider such evidence. Education Code 47607.2.

Turning to the schoolwide and student group performance on the state and local indicators, NUHC students' scores on the annual CAASPP assessments for English language arts (ELA) and math are reflected in the chart below. Scores are reported as an average distance from standard (DFS) for each student group included.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that the foregoing reflects the law through the end of 2025 but that portions of Education Code 47607 become inoperative on January 1, 2026.

2025 Dashboard	Northern United Humboldt Charter		State of California	
	ELA DFS	Math DFS	ELA DFS	Math DFS
All Students	17.8 below	24.9 below	8.1 below	42.4 below
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	21.7 below	17 below	35.3 below	72.9 below
Students with Disabilities	60.5 below*	39.9 below*	89.4 below	120.7 below
Hispanic	53.1 below*	3.2 below*	33.7 below	73.6 below
Two or More Races	9.7 above*	19.8 below*	29.4 above	0.7 below
White	2.1 below	15.9 below	1.7 above	6.2 below

\*No performance color is assigned due to a student group size of less than 30.

The criteria to be considered a high performing charter school is that all indicators are either blue or green, while the criteria to be considered a low performing charter school is that all indicators are either red or orange. Charter schools that do not satisfy either criteria are considered to be middle performing. Thus, HCOE may grant renewal of NUHC under Education Code 47607.2 since CDE has classified it as a “middle performing” charter school.

Petition – Legal Requirements

HCOE has identified the following area that is required by law but is absent from NUHC’s petition, and Staff recommends that NUHC be required to update the item in the petition by June 1, 2026.

- A description of the process for notifying the district of residence and authorizing LEA when a special education student enrolls, becomes eligible, ineligible, and/or leaves the charter.

**Conclusion**

HCOE staff recommends that the Board grant the request to renew NUHC’s charter petition for a term of five years from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031 conditioned upon executing the conditions attached as Exhibit A and through a Memorandum of Understanding executed between HCOE and NPA by June 1, 2026. HCOE staff recommends that the Board adopt these Findings of Fact as its own.

## Exhibit A

### **List of Conditions**

#### *Memorandum of Understanding*

HCOE and NUHC shall negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding addressing the respective rights and obligations of the parties consistent with the authorizer-charter relationship, including but not limited to the conditions set forth below, which shall be executed by June 1, 2026, and approved by the respective governing boards of the parties prior to the commencement of NUHC's renewal term on July 1, 2026.

#### *Petition Requirements*

Prior to June 1, 2026, NUHC shall update the following item in the petition:

- A description of the process for notifying the district of residence and authorizing LEA when a special education student enrolls, becomes eligible, ineligible, and/or leaves the charter.

By signing this document, NUHC acknowledges and agrees to the requirements set forth herein.

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Shari Lovett, Director

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Date