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Washington County Judge Allows AEA's Lawsuit to Move Forward Against Woodland Prep

Montgomery, Alabama, February 5, 2020 -The Alabama Education Association (AEA) is proud to report the lawsuit filed on behalf of its local affiliate and educators in Washington County will move forward. Yesterday, Circuit Judge Gaines C. McCorquodale denied various motions filed by defendant Soner Tarim, the Texas-based charter school operator who sought to open a franchise in rural southwest Alabama, despite virtually unanimous local opposition. The rulings mean the case will continue to move forward, discovery will begin immediately, and those behind Woodland Prep will have to testify under oath about the events which led to its controversial approval and provide documentation to support their claims.

This litigation is completely separate from the action initiated on Monday by the Alabama Public Charter School Commission to revoke Woodland Prep's charter. After refusing to give the beleaguered charter school yet another extension, the Commission found that the organizers were in material breach of the charter/contract that was to govern operation of the school. The organizers are entitled to due process and will receive a hearing prior to the decision becoming final. However, the lawsuit in Washington County before Judge McCorquodale will continue separately and is not impacted by those proceedings. This lawsuit focuses on the fraud committed by the defendants intentionally providing information to the Commission that was false and inaccurate. If Woodland Prep had provided the correct information initially, the Commission would not have approved its application.

AEA's position has been consistent — it is not against all charter schools, only bad charter schools. The national experts who reviewed Woodland Prep's application determined it would be a bad charter school and urged the application be denied. That decision was overridden by politically-motivated individuals who previously served on the Commission. However, the new members of the Commission are taking their responsibilities seriously and have started the process of correcting that error. With Woodland Prep now facing two separate legal actions seeking to shut it down before precious instructional time for students, and taxpayer money, are wasted, AEA is hopeful this entire matter will be put to rest for good in the near future.