ARIZONA AUTISM
CHARTER SCHOOLS, INC.

December 9, 2014

Dear Members of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools,

We are writing this Letter of Intent to request the Boards permission to submit an Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment Request so that our school can apply to offer grades 6, 7 and 8. In addition, we'd like permission to submit an Enrollment Cap Notification Request.

Although these expansion requests are typically reserved for schools that have been in operation for at least a year, Arizona Autism Charter School offers a unique model focused on best-practices for students with autism and we see the need to expand in our second year of operation.

In 2013, Arizona Autism Charter School was our state's first approved charter school focused on the learning needs of the growing population of children with autism. The school opened this fall of 2014 offering grades K – 5. The school quickly met its enrollment goal with 90 students and has a waiting list of 65 students that continues to grow almost daily. About 50 percent of students on the waiting list are for grades 4 and 5. We also have a Middle School interest list of about 40 potential students. Currently, the school has one class of eight 5th grade students that needs to be promoted to 6th grade in the 2015-16 school year. Most of these students have struggled previously in district and private day school settings and would like to continue at our school.

Our academic and behavioral program is grounded in the principals of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which is the most widely supported, data-driven teaching strategy for children on the autism spectrum. In addition, we offer classes with a maximum of nine students, and at least a 3:1 student to teacher ratio. Our teachers and staff have experience and training in best-practices for autism and our school offers continual staff development on ABA teaching strategies and adapting curriculum to meet Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards.

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Our growth plan includes adding one grade level every year after opening and introducing 18 new kindergarten students yearly. Below is a timeline of our growth plan for the next three years:

- 2015-16 Add 6th Grade, 18 Kinder Students (9 in morning kinder class, 9 in afternoon kinder class)
- 2016-17 Add 7th Grade, 18 Kinder Students (9 in morning kinder class, 9 in afternoon kinder class)
- 2017-18 Add 8th Grade, 18 Kinder Students (9 in morning kinder class, 9 in afternoon kinder class)

Our school is leasing a great facility that is centrally located on 7th St. just south of Camelback. Our current facility has the space to add 18 more students in the 2015-16 school year. Our current approved enrollment cap is **99** students, so we would like to request that our enrollment cap be increased to **108** for the 2015-16 school year. Our expansion plan includes finding another centrally located facility to move our middle school students in the 2016-17 school year.

Families travel from all over the valley to attend our school, as it is the only charter school in the Phoenix metro area focused on ABA teaching strategies and the learning needs of children with autism, and only one of two charter schools in the valley focused on this population of students.

The school has opened successfully and is in good standing with all applicable state entities. We recently received news that we passed our First Year Site Visit audit conducted by ASBCS staff, we have submitted all required reports to the Arizona Department of Education and have passed financial and instructional program audits conducted by the Arizona Charter Schools Program (AZ-CSP) grant.

The Arizona Autism Charter School leadership team is prepared to share data with the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools to demonstrate student progress from the beginning of the school year to the present. It has been amazing to welcome our first class of students and watch them flourish in an environment that is geared toward their needs and strengths. We would be grateful to have the opportunity to share this growth with ASBCS. Our hope is to expand our school and programs into the middle school grades in the next three years to continue to serve this growing population of students.

Thank you for considering our request.

Diana Diaz

Founder and Executive Director

Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc.

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