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# Christie Administration Demonstrates Commitment to Improving Access to Quality Education With Record Number of New Charter School Approvals

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

## Governor Christie Sends Clear Message that Children in Chronically Failing Public Schools Can No Longer Wait for Help

Trenton, NJ – Following on the heels of Governor Chris Christie’s State of the State address where he declared that it is no longer acceptable for a child to be stuck in chronically failing public schools in New Jersey, the Christie Administration today welcomed the approval of 23 new charter schools. This marks the largest number of charter schools approved in an application cycle since the Charter School Program Act was signed into law in 1995.

“It is not acceptable that a child who is neglected in a New Jersey school must accept it because of their zip code. Charter schools give parents and children a choice and provide a much-needed alternative to help ensure every child in New Jersey receives a quality education. We cannot ask children and families that have been relegated to failing public schools to wait any longer for relief while their hope is stolen away,” said Governor Christie. “Today, we are taking action to ensure that more students are opening the doors to new opportunity, a better education and a brighter future.”

In September, the most recent round of charter approvals before today, the Christie Administration granted approval to six new charter applications. Governor Christie’s commitment to high-quality charter expansion and greater choice will allow for a total of 97 charter schools serving approximately 25,000 students to be operating by September 2011, offering students and parents more and better educational choices.

“I’ve come back to the Robert Treat Academy because it is a shining example of the excellent results and restored hope that high-quality charter schools give to their students and communities,” added Governor Christie. “While 100,000 New Jersey children are trapped in nearly 200 failing schools, it is unconscionable to further delay the reforms needed to provide real educational opportunity for our children. We are taking steps now by approving more charters and aggressively implementing the Interdistrict School Choice law signed in September, but we must go further. Today, I am also proposing sweeping changes to New Jersey’s charter school law, in line with my education reform agenda outlined in September, to improve the application and approval processes, provide additional flexibility to charter schools and encourage new and innovative types of charters.”

“Increasing the opportunity and choice available to families is crucial to reforming the education system and building a foundation for its excellence,” said Acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. The record number of new charter schools approved today is a tangible example of Governor Christie’s commitment to bold and ambitious education reforms to put children first in New Jersey.”

A Department of Education report released today shows the majority of charters in urban areas last year outperformed other public schools in their host districts on required standardized testing. The charters, located in former Abbott districts, scored higher on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge and the High School Proficiency Assessment tests in 2010. For eighth-grade students, 79 percent of the charter schools in former Abbott districts scored higher than their home district in Language Arts, while 69 percent of the charter schools scored higher than their home district in Math. The report can be accessed here <http://www.state.nj.us/education/chartsch/expectations.pdf>.

Latest Christie Administration Charter School Approvals:

\*Arete:K-4 (300) East Orange, Orange – Essex County\*

Arete Charter School will offer a single-sex classroom, co-ed school environment. The school will offer single-gender classroom settings to differentiate instruction and drive student achievement.

\*Atlantic City Community Charter School:K-8 (950) Atlantic City – Atlantic County\*

AC Community will seek to replicate the success of the high-performing Chester Community Charter School in Chester, Pennsylvania. The school will focus on high expectations and strong student outcomes for urban students.

\*Atlantic Preparatory Charter School: 9-12 (552) Atlantic City – Atlantic County\*

Application presents a sound plan for a blended learning school program. The blended learning would incorporate online learning into the regular school day as well as provide increased access to schoolwork for students and families while not in school.

\*Bright Horizon Charter School: K-8 (306) Penns Grove-Carneys Point - Salem County\*

Charter school will aim to serve foster care students or students at risk of being placed in an out-of-home setting though the school would be open to all students. The school will establish partnership with local organizations and agencies to

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offer comprehensive wrap-around services for its student population.

\*Camden Community Charter School: K-8 (950) Camden – Camden County\*

Camden Community will seek to replicate the success of the high-performing Chester Community Charter School in Chester, Pennsylvania. The charter school will focus on high expectations and strong student outcomes for urban students.

\*Dr. Lena Edwards: K-8 (396) Jersey City – Hudson County\*

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School will offer a classical education program with a focus on character education.

\*Dr. Therman Evans Charter School for Excellence: 6-8 (225) Linden, Elizabeth, Roselle – Union County\*

The Dr. Therman Evans Charter School will offer a program focused on character, leadership, and culture.

\*Forest Hill Charter School: K-8 (80) Newark – Essex County\*

Forest Hill will provide a comprehensive program to serve students with autism and Pervasive Developmental Delay (PDD).

\*Global Visions: K-4 (165) Egg Harbor City, Galloway Township, Mullica Township- Atlantic County\*

Global Visions charter school will be centered on project-based learning and teaching to the multiple intelligences of students.

\*Great Oaks: 6-10 (331) Newark - Essex\*

Great Oaks program aims to serve minority and low-income students in a rigorous college-preparatory environment. Great Oaks is modeled on the successful MATCH school in Boston and other high-performing charter schools.

\*Kingdom: K-6 (210) Gloucester Township\*

The Kingdom Charter School will offer an experiential learning program that addresses the various learning styles of children.

\*M.E.T.S.: 6-12 (560) Jersey City\*

The application presented a plan for a program that will have a strong mathematics, engineering, technology and science curriculum. METS is planning to partner with Liberty Science Center to implement the curriculum.

\*Martha Palmer Chaneyfield Charter School: K-4 (400) Newark – Essex County\*

Martha Palmer Chaneyfield Charter School will offer a community-based school committed to excellence for its students.

\*Millville: K-5 (216) Millville – Cumberland County\*

Millville Charter will focus on academic excellence with an emphasis on the arts and will build on the successes at Vineland Public Charter School.

\*New Day Charter High School: 9-12 (100) Newark – Essex County\*

New Day Charter High School will offer a program focused on academic achievement and supporting the whole child. Specifically it will address the issues of substance abuse, wellness, and developing strong decision-making skills for its students.

\*New Jersey Virtual Academy: K-12 (1200) Newark – Essex County \*

New Jersey Virtual Academy will offer a virtual learning program for students in Newark.

\*New Jersey Virtual: 10-12 (300) Camden, Perth Amboy, Neptune Township, Paterson\*

New Jersey Virtual will offer a blended learning program for high school students who have dropped out of school.

\*People's Prep: 9-12 (380) Newark – Essex County\*

People's Prep will be a school focused on ensuring academic excellence for all students, developing strong character, and building a commitment to community.

\*Roseville Community: K-4 (330) Newark – Essex County\*

Roseville Community Charter School will offer a rigorous academic program committed to developing the character and discipline in students that is required to achieve academic excellence in high school, college, and beyond.

\*Shalom: K-8 (240) Englewood, Teaneck – Bergen County\*

This application presents a plan for an academically rigorous, Hebrew language immersion program.

\*Spirit Prep: 9-12 (600) East Orange, Irvington, Newark – Essex County\*

Spirit Prep will offer a blended learning model of project-based learning, face-to-face learning, and online instruction integrated with instrumental music.

\*Vailsburg Prep: 9-12 (600) Newark – Essex County\*

Vailsburg Prep proposes to open a high school that will serve students using a research-based, blended learning curriculum. In this model, traditional classroom instruction will be supplemented with online learning.

\*Willingboro: K-5, 9-12 (410) Willingboro – Burlington County\*

Willingboro Academy Charter School will offer a curriculum that infuses technology and the arts throughout all content areas. Additionally, the school will focus on character development and community involvement.

\* \_The Christie Reform Agenda: 2011 Is the Year for Education Reform\_ \*

In line with the Christie Reform Agenda for education outlined in September, Governor Christie today is delivering to the Legislature a specific legislative proposal for significant changes to strengthen and improve New Jersey's charter school law. These changes include:

\*Improving Authorizing and Application Process:\*

·Adding Multiple Authorizers

Ø31 NJ public colleges (research, 4-year and 2-year) and all local school boards eligible to become authorizers if approved by the NJDOE and enter into contract with NJDOE;

ØAuthorizers would solicit, review and approve new charters, enter into performance contracts with charters, oversee charters, make renewal and revocation decisions and report on their charters' performance;

ØCommissioner oversight over authorizers with authority to terminate them if they fail to fulfill their duties or have a pattern of poor performance for the schools they authorized; and,

·Encouraging Charter School Applicants

ØAttracting best operators to NJ and encouraging top NJ charters to expand through a streamlined application process;

ØLarger charter school enrollment regions;

ØRolling applications;

ØEasier notice requirements;

ØDo not have to unrealistically identify facility before granting charter; and,

ØLonger charters with less frequent renewals.

\* \_Helping Charter Schools through Flexibility:\_ \*

·Flexibility with Operations and Administration

ØProviding blanket waiver from all traditional public school regulations and statutes except for in the areas of academic standards, assessment, testing, civil rights, student health and safety, and open public records;

ØProviding bussing flexibility for charter schools.

·Flexibility with Employees

ØElimination of certification requirements but possibly covered in new performance contract;

ØElimination of tenure; and,

ØMore salary flexibility for charter schools by eliminating the existing limits

·Flexibility with Finances

ØEliminates the false distinction between nonprofit and for-profit operators;

ØFacility help with charter school right of first refusal for school districts selling property.

\* \_Encouraging New Types of Charter Schools:\_ \*

·Allowing single-gender schools;

·Encouraging special education/inclusion-focused schools;

·Encourages charters incorporating more efficient on-line learning instructional models;

·Public school charter conversion with easier parent trigger;

·Easier private school conversion; and,

·Allows districts to convert failing public schools into charters.

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