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Governor Christie Calls on Legislature to Enact Critical Education Reforms

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Governor's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Strengthens State Commitment to Education with Highest Level of Funding in State History

Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie and Acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf today visited Bordentown Regional High School to discuss the Administration's historic support for public education in New Jersey and to urge the legislature to pass the remaining critical education reforms needed to turn around failing schools and provide every New Jersey child with an education that prepares them for college or a career. The Governor's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget proposal provides \$7.8 billion in K-12 formula aid, an increase of \$135 million and part of \$213 million in overall increased financial support over Fiscal Year 2012.

"The students here at Bordentown Regional High are a real testament to the great work being done in schools and classrooms all around our state today," said Governor Christie. "Every child in our state deserves the opportunity of a quality education, which is why I have made real education reform a top priority of my Administration. Our commitment to education means providing resources and spending them in the right way – increased funding must go hand-in-hand with accountability and reform. I have put forward a Fiscal Year 2013 Budget that will bring state support for education to the highest level in our state's history and a comprehensive reform agenda that provide the tools to fix our chronically failing schools and make our good schools great. It's time to make these reforms a reality and put an end to failure."

"This Administration has made a commitment to provide unprecedented levels of state education aid and now it is time

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for the legislature to advance the second piece of our comprehensive education reform agenda,” continued Governor Christie. “It’s time for them to act and pass education reform. New Jersey’s children can’t afford anything less than to see us reform the rules for teacher evaluation, tenure and compensation.”

In partnership with his budget proposal, Governor Christie also outlined common sense changes to the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) to ensure that funding is used in a way that will close the achievement gap and better serve those children who need resources most.

Under the Governor’s proposed Fiscal Year 2013 Budget, Bordentown Regional School District will receive an additional \$536,229 in K-12 state aid, or an increase of 7.3% over Fiscal Year 2012. This is the second consecutive year in which the district received a funding increase. In addition, Bordentown is one of 372 school districts and charter schools that have signed on to New Jersey’s reform agenda to participate in the state’s \$38 million Race to the Top award. As a result, the district will receive an additional \$17,762 to implement initiatives that:

- Develop model curriculum and assessments for all core content subject areas to support the adoption of the Common Core State Standards;
- Develop and rollout of an online Instructional Improvement System (IIS) that will serve as a platform for teachers to access the model curriculum and other supports like formative assessments and instructional tools; and
- Implement the state’s new teacher evaluation system and the creation of a principal evaluation pilot program.

Moreover, through Governor Christie’s leadership, New Jersey is advancing a bold reform agenda to close the achievement gap in the state. Last month, New Jersey was one of the first states in the country to receive flexibility from No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and has developed a new school accountability system to focus resources on turning around the lowest performing schools in the state. The Christie Administration’s NCLB application, submitted in November, is part of a broader effort to reform the state’s overlapping and contradictory accountability systems and a comprehensive education reform agenda to increase academic standards, the effectiveness and talent of educators, and accountability for results in the classroom.

Implementing the reforms outlined in the waiver makes New Jersey a leader in developing a new and more meaningful accountability system to better identify troubled schools, diagnose the causes of their struggles, and target our resources to improve the lowest-performing schools.

In addition, the Christie Administration is currently pursuing critical legislation needed to achieve the education reform goals of Governor Christie and consistent with the NCLB waiver application approved by the Obama Administration. This package of bills goes hand in hand with bipartisan education efforts to fix failing schools, broaden school choice for students in underperforming districts, identify and reward effective teachers, and support teachers who are not effective. These are:

- School Children First Act (S-807/A-981): The bill would create a statewide educator evaluation system consistent

with the goals of the Obama Administration, ties tenure to effectiveness, ends forced placements and Last-In-First-Out (LIFO) personnel policies by using both seniority and educator effectiveness in staffing decisions, and reforms compensation systems. These changes will allow New Jersey to identify and reward the most effective teachers in a meaningful and fair way, while also better supporting those comparatively few teachers who are not effective.

- Charter Reform Bill (A-980): The bill provides critical updates to strengthen and improve New Jersey's charter law. The bill increases the number of charter school authorizers, permits public schools to be converted to charter schools by local boards of education as well as the Department of Education Commissioner, and increases charter autonomy while making them more accountable.
- Opportunity Scholarship Act (S-1779): The bill would provide tax credits to entities contributing to scholarships for low-income students, broadening choice and educational options for children in some of New Jersey's worst performing schools.

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