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NEWS RELEASE

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Whitman Statement on School Construction Meeting

NJ Gov. Christie Whitman issued the following statement after a meeting with Democrat leaders from the Assembly and Senate to discuss the state's program for school construction. Today's meeting follows a similar meeting last week with Senate President Don DiFrancesco and Assembly Speaker Jack Collins:

"Today's meeting was fruitful and productive. It gave me the opportunity to reiterate my belief that the program must be accountable and affordable, accessible to all school districts, and that it be consistent with the court mandate so construction activities may begin this spring," she said.

"The funding for this program will come entirely from state taxpayers so it must include standards and safeguards to ensure affordability and accountability to those taxpayers. School construction money must be spent in the most effective and efficient manner possible on educationally appropriate projects," she said.

"The need for school repairs and new construction is an important issue for young students in virtually every district in the state. The program must provide access for every school district, not only the Abbott districts, to take advantage of this enormous opportunity to improve our school facilities for our children," she said.

"Finally, the program must be in accord with the Supreme Court's order, not only in the area of funding these improvements, but, on beginning those improvements this spring, as well," Gov. Whitman said.

"I am encouraged that the leaders of both Parties and both Houses share these goals and are committed to achieving them for our students and the state's taxpayers," she said.