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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CHARTER REPORT FLAWED *California research groups offers baseless criticism*

(Washington, D.C. 4/7/03) A report released by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) offers a distorted view of charter schools and does not constitute objective research, according to a detailed analysis of the report's findings by the Center for Education Reform.

The report, entitled *Charter Schools and Inequality: National Disparities in Funding, Teacher Quality, and Student Support* and authored by Bruce Fuller and four other researchers for PACE, takes a narrow look at national statistical data on money, race and teacher credentials and uses it to argue that charters may reinforce the achievement gap. The authors ignore charter school achievement results that exist and render those inputs meaningless. For example:

- * Michigan charters serve more than twice as many minorities and about 1.5 times as many economically disadvantaged students and nearly 75 percent of Michigan charter schools last year increased their scores in most grades and on the state standardized tests. In 7th and 8th grades alone, more than one fourth to nearly one third of charters have advanced student learning enough to top state averages in reading, writing, math and/or science.
- * In California 13 percent of the statewide charter school population is made up of African-American students, compared to eight percent for all public schools. According to recent surveys, African-American families clearly feel the most poorly served by the traditional public school system, while charter school students in charter schools operating for five or more years on average outperformed their counterparts in all public schools.

The report also charges that charters have proportionately fewer credentialed teachers than traditional public schools, suggesting that charter teachers are not quality teachers. Yet there is no correlation between quality teaching and traditional state credentials, whereas there is

evidence that teacher content-knowledge positively affects student achievement; something overlooked in the study.

Showing a disproportionate number of African-American and Latino students in charter schools compared to those students in traditional public schools, the authors conclude charters are more segregated, yet they ignore where these schools are located, how they compare district by district, or the fact that minorities tend to be the most underserved traditionally and thus, demonstrate more demand for choices when offered. Results from CER's 2002 *Survey of America's Charter Schools* reveal that over 40 percent of charter schools reported serving minority populations of more than 60 percent and more than two thirds of all charter schools had waiting lists. Such data suggests that charters are serving students most in need, not under-serving them as the report concludes.

"Charter school research is important but reports like these do not contribute to a better understanding of or improvement of such reforms," noted CER president Jeanne Allen. There is no other choice but to conclude that this report was politically motivated to tarnish rather than educate about charter schools."

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The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization providing support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For further information, please call (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at <http://edreform.com>.