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Independent authorizer approves 17 new charter schools

Florida commission becomes official authorizer

Washington, D.C. (2/20/2008) – The Florida Schools of Excellence Commission (FSE) made its first formal approvals of new charter schools last week, demonstrating rigor in the process and joining 16 other states that permit entities other than school boards to approve charters.

“Florida’s charter law now ranks among the top six in the country, thanks to the establishment of the commission,” said Jeanne Allen, president of The Center for Education Reform (CER), a Washington, D.C.-based school reform advocacy group. “This new authorizer is a model for other states that have experienced bottlenecks in chartering among some less effective school boards.”

The FSE was established by law in July 2006 but has experienced unprecedented obstacles to fulfilling its mission since that time, according to CER. The independent body, based on a combination of models in the District of Columbia, Arizona and Michigan, has been the subject of numerous school board-driven law suits and actions aimed at giving local school districts exclusive authority over charters. Last year’s approval process was delayed until the fall. Applications were reviewed by experts and the commissioners over the past several weeks, leading to last week’s approval.

The U.S. is currently home to charter school laws in 40 states and Washington, D.C. Seventeen of these laws include multiple authorizers like the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission. Legislation to create a similar is currently active in Georgia.

For more information, e-mail the Commission at FloridaSchoolsofExcellence@fldoe.org.

The Center for Education Reform has, since 1995, produced the only multi-sourced and real time data on the growth of the charter schools, including state by state enrollment, demographics and trends. The Center's research is consistently cited by news organizations and other education reform groups. In addition to supporting broad activities on all education reforms that promote freedom and accountability, CER is the only school reform organization to annually evaluate and rank charter school laws and aggressively advocate for their improvement among policymakers and activists.

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