Good morning Chairwoman Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee. For the record my name is Rick Pressler, Interim President & CEO of the NJ Charter Schools Association (NJCSA). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the 87 public charter schools in New Jersey, the 40,000 students attending those schools this year and the 25,000+ households that are currently sitting on waiting lists for public charter schools.

For the record, the NJCSA fully supports this package of bills. We see these bills as the right approach in terms of policy for our state, and we commend the sponsors for their leadership.

New Jersey’s public charter school community always has, and will continue to fully support “high stakes” testing as part of a strong regimen for holding schools accountable for student learning and the attainment of high academic standards that align with college and career readiness. As you are all well aware, New Jersey’s public charter schools exist to be innovative, to serve as incubators of change, and to try new things that produce positive outcomes for kids.

By our very nature, and through the enabling legislation that created public charter schools in 1996, our members deal with high stakes every single day of the week. Unlike traditional public schools, if our schools fail to produce positive outcomes for kids, we close.

Stated simply, we see this package of bills as a very good approach towards dealing with the legitimate concerns raised by some, while placing children first. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning.

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