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NJCSA Takes a Stand Against For-Profit Charter School Operators **at Annual Convention**

Atlantic City, NJ- On October 14th and 15th, the New Jersey Charter Schools Association hosted its annual conference, "Excellence, Equity and Innovation" where more than 500 charter school professionals, advocates, and policymakers from across the state gathered together to examine a wide variety of topics surrounding public charter schools.

During Tuesday's keynote address, Harry Lee, President of the New Jersey Charter School Association, announced its Board recently voted to no longer permit schools that contract with for-profit education management organizations (EMOs) to be members of the organization.

"NJCSA is sending a clear message that we do not believe for-profit education management organizations (EMOs) serve the best interests of children," said Lee. "Regardless of the management organization used, all charter schools are non-profit, tuition-free, public, and open to all. New Jersey has never seen a proliferation of for-profit EMOs that contract with public charter schools. However, the few that have opened were quickly closed. It is a broken educational model that we no longer want associated with the tremendous work of non-profit public charter school operators."

Over the more than twenty years public charter schools have been in existence, there have been 8 for-profit charter operators and 6 of those schools were closed due to poor performance. Currently, only 2 out of 88 charter schools in New Jersey are operated by for-profit entities and one of those entities has taken steps to transition into a non-profit organization.

The 11th annual event also included a keynote speech from renowned education leader, Shavar Jeffries, President of Democrats for Education Reform (DFER). An advocate for social justice for 20 years, Jeffries ran an institutional-reform and class-action litigation clinic at Seton Hall Law School's Center for Social Justice in Newark. From 2008 to 2010, Shavar was counsel to New Jersey Attorney General Anne Milgram. He also serves on the boards of the National Mentoring Partnership, New Classrooms, KIPP New Jersey, and Seton Hall Preparatory School, and also sits on the advisory boards for NextWork and One Love.

This year's gathering included more than 25 breakout sessions, and 50 exhibitors. The conference also gave attendees an opportunity to celebrate the inspiring work of public charter schools and discuss the challenges that lie ahead for the sector.

"It is great when the charter community can come together to reflect on changing educational outcomes for New Jersey's most vulnerable students. While we have certainly accomplished a lot, including the

extraordinary work to close the achievement gap in Newark, there is still so much to be done to lead our children on a path to opportunity,” Lee said.

Funding gaps, especially for facilities, and policy barriers stand in the way of more than 35,000 students on waiting lists from attending a public charter school.

Lee noted, “One of the biggest challenges to the continued expansion of public charter schools in the Garden State is the lack of facilities funding. This major funding gap has resulted in school leaders struggling to find suitable and affordable facilities their students.”

“I’m already looking forward to next year’s conference and seeing the progress made to improve the public charter school sector, which includes fighting for fair funding for our students,” concluded Lee.

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About New Jersey Charter Schools Association

The New Jersey Charter Schools Association (NJCSA) is a statewide association representing the state’s charter sector. New Jersey is home to 88 public charter schools, serving more than 54,000 children. NJCSA was formed in 1999 and today is charged with advancing a quality public education for New Jersey’s children through quality public charter schools. Our vision is that every child in the State of New Jersey has the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school that best meets his or her needs. For more information, visit www.njcharters.org