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### **School Reform Commission Should Not Approve Any New Charter Schools**

#### ***Report shows legal, fiscal and oversight challenges in granting new charters in Philadelphia***

**PHILADELPHIA** (January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015) – Public Citizens for Children and Youth urges the School Reform Commission to reject all 40 applications for new charter schools in Philadelphia based on the findings of PCCY’s latest report, “The Legal, Fiscal, and Oversight Challenges of Granting New Charters in Philadelphia.”

PCCY’s report finds that if the School Reform Commission approves additional charters its actions would stand at odds with state law that requires the Commission to both ensure the welfare of all its students and ensure the fiscal solvency of the District. Further, the report also points out that absent additional state or local funding, new charters would be funded at the expense of students attending already severely underfunded district-run schools. PCCY reviewed data on 20 applicants currently operating 40 charter schools in Philadelphia and found that nearly half of the applicants operate schools where less than 50% of their students are on grade level in reading and math.

Additional key findings from PCCY’s report:

- If all applicants are approved, district charter payments could grow to more than \$1 billion per year, or 42% of the district’s budget and charter school enrollment would increase to 51% of the district’s total enrollment
- Most of the applicants (60%) operate schools with fewer minority, ELL and low-income students than the average enrollment in district schools, calling to question the capacity of these operators to educate the typical district student.
- Less than a quarter of the applicants operate schools that serve a percentage of low-income students that is on par with district schools and have an acceptable score of 70 or higher on the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile
- A majority of the applicants are proposing to open charters in neighborhoods where the School Redesign initiative or university partnerships are planned or are currently in place
- A thorough review of the applicants is not possible because data on the applicants’ ability to keep their students rather than have them drop out or transfer is not available
- The resources of the district’s Office of Charter Schools are already overtaxed in the monitoring of the existing 86 charter schools.
- Four charter applicants are known to have management or fiscal irregularities

“Parents across the city want schools to improve and they have every right to be impatient about the progress of reform. But opening the flood gates to new charters will harm students attending district-



run schools,” said PCCY Executive Director Donna Cooper. “District-run schools have too few teachers, shuttered libraries, and limited access to arts or a robust academic curriculum. Any action that increases charter cost to the district will cripple these schools. Given the district’s current financial condition, absent new state or local funds, it would be irresponsible and stand at odds with the purpose and duties of the Commission, for additional charter seats to be approved.”

PCCY points out that the state legislature eliminated \$190 million in funds the district received toward charter school costs. As a result, paying for charter expansion will require cuts to district schools that further erode the quality of education for students attending those schools. In order to ensure no students are put at risk through the loss of additional resources caused by charter expansion, PCCY urges the Commission to reject all of the applicants at this time.

To read PCCY’s full report, visit [www.pccy.org/2015charterreport](http://www.pccy.org/2015charterreport).

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