State Charter School Commission

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State Charter School Commission Conducts Inaugural Meeting

Statute Sets Up Independent Review Body

CHICAGO, November 28, 2011 -- Illinois’ new State Charter School Commission held its first meeting November 15 in the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago and took a number steps to begin its work of evaluating proposals for new charter schools throughout Illinois. The Commission was established by the Charter School Quality Act of 2011, which was signed into law by Governor Quinn this summer.

A charter school is a public school that is funded by tax dollars but is not operated by a local school district. Charter schools have greater levels of flexibility than traditional public schools and greater levels of accountability for student results. Charter schools do not charge tuition, are open to all students in a community and cannot administer admissions tests.

Educators, parents, community organizations and others may form a non-profit board to apply to start a charter school. If approved, the non-profit receives a 5-year contract, or “charter,” to operate the school. At the end of the five years, the school’s academic performance is evaluated to determine if the results are strong enough to continue operate.

The State Charter School Commission was established to evaluate proposals for new charter schools that are denied by local school districts and subsequently appealed to the state.

At its first meeting, the Commission accepted its first appeal from the Mastery Charter School in Maywood and scheduled a public hearing on that proposal on December 12 at 7 p.m. The Commission also reviewed its obligations under Illinois ethics laws, Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act.
In addition to Richmond, the other members of the State Charter School Commission are:

- Glen Barton, former Chairman and CEO of Caterpillar, Peoria;
- Sean Denney, Lobbyist, Illinois Education Association, Evanston;
- Jaime Guzman, Chief Advisor to the Board of Trustees, City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago;
- Mike Jacoby, Executive Director, Illinois Association of Business School Officials, DeKalb;
- Angela Rudolph, Program Officer, Joyce Foundation, Chicago;
- Paul Swanstrom, former Superintendent, Joliet Township High Schools, Crete;
- Patria Van Pelt-Watkins, Executive Director, TARGET Area Development Corp., Chicago;
- Rudy Valdez, General Manager—Asia Programs, Hamilton Sunstrand Corp., Rockford.

Charter schools serve currently 53,000 students in Illinois. Nationally, 1.8 million students attend approximately 5300 charter schools.

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