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FLORIDA SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE COMMISSION STRENGTHENS FLORIDA'S K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

Florida Schools of Excellence legislation is considered a best-practice model

Florida -- November 1, 2007-- The Florida Schools of Excellence Commission (FSEC) was established in 2006 to develop, promote and monitor high quality charter schools and co-sponsors throughout Florida. The law passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan sponsorship and support in both the Senate (35-5) and the House (89-25).

The FSE Commission serves as an additional sponsor of public charter schools in the state. School districts retain the ability to sponsor and oversee charter schools as well.

This is another step forward for education in Florida where laws already allow a flexible framework for implementing and improving the K-12 public education system in a manner that is responsive to evolving needs. For example, the public education system includes the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, the Florida Virtual School, and charter lab schools. These programs offer K-12 public education options that operate independently of any school district.

The FSEC legislation requires FSE-sponsored charter schools to provide high quality educational options for students regardless of disability, race or socioeconomic status. Following a successful national trend, the FSE Commission is authorized to pursue innovative partnerships with municipalities and state colleges and universities as co-sponsors to provide maximum access to high-quality educational options with an emphasis on low-income, low-performing, gifted or underserved populations.

FSE approves first municipal co-sponsor

The Commission recently approved the City of Hialeah as its first municipal co-sponsor. This past year, both public high schools in the City of Hialeah received letter grades of "F" under the state's A-Plus Plan. As an FSE co-sponsor, the City of Hialeah will be able to pursue additional educational choices for its students.

The Florida League of Cities, Broward League of Cities, Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and the Center for Education Reform, along with mayors throughout the state, all supported the FSE legislation because it would offer Florida's education system an option that's available in a majority of jurisdictions with charter schools.

"During my tenure as the past president of both the Miami-Dade and the Florida League of Cities, I was honored to support legislation to give our state's families meaningful public education choices to meet their needs," said City of Hialeah Mayor Julio Robaina. "Charter schools represent a genuine alternative to the status quo with proven academic success and innovation. Charter schools help us reinvent education; as community-based learning centers shaped by shared needs, priorities, and expectations in our communities."

"This Florida Schools of Excellence legislation was heard in numerous committees with great deliberations held by both parties," said Mayor Frank Ortis, Pembroke Pines, "The bill passed with a strong majority in both the Senate and the House and it provides municipalities with additional opportunities to become involved with public education in their communities."



The concept of having multiple sponsorship for charter schools is not new. The majority of the 40 states with charter schools, comprised of 27 different jurisdictions in all, including Texas, California, New York, Michigan, and Colorado, allow multiple sponsors.

“Nationally, Florida’s FSE legislation is considered a model because it was carefully crafted from the proven experiences and best practices of states with multiple sponsors,” explains Michael Kooi, executive director, Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools.

The experiences over the last 15 years of the nation's charter school movement have demonstrated that states with multiple sponsors have more accountable charter schools with higher academic performance. In these states, sponsors have become more proactive and have approved charter schools that fill a gap or serve a population of students whose needs were not being met in the traditional public school system.

There are currently 355 public charter schools in the state of Florida serving more than 98,000 K-12th grade students.

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