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EIGHTEEN ORGANIZATIONS SUBMIT PROPOSALS TO LEAD PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN WASHINGTON STATE

*State Charter Authorizer to Review Proposals for High-Quality Public Charters to
Serve Washington State Students*

Olympia, WA – Washington’s recently-formed Charter School Commission (the Commission) today announced that 18 organizations have submitted 19 proposals to launch high-quality public charter schools in the state of Washington (with one organization applying to open two schools). The Commission announced a Request For Proposal (RFP) process in September to allow educators from across the state and nation to submit their proposals. The Commission has implemented a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation process that will allow experts to analyze the proposals, with a goal of selecting proposals that can significantly improve learning outcomes for all students.

“The Commission is impressed by the commitment and effort from the 18 applicants who have submitted proposals, especially given the compressed timeline,” said Steve Sundquist, Charter School Commissioner Chair. “We’ve intentionally created one of our nation’s most rigorous proposal processes to ensure that our state’s most underserved students have access to a high-performing school option that will meet their needs.”

The Commission received proposals from educators with track records of student success, including several Washington State public school principals, community-based organizations, and national charter school operators. The Commission will review the proposals to ensure that all necessary materials have been submitted. Once the proposals have been vetted for completeness, the Commission will begin evaluating them, beginning on December 2, 2013. The evaluation process will include conducting thorough reviews by state and national authorities on student achievement/performance, school finance, school operations/governance experts and in-person interviews with applicants. In addition, the Commission will be hosting public forums, which will provide opportunities for applicants, families and interested citizens to engage directly with the Commission.

"The spirit of collaboration between Spokane Public Schools and the Washington State Charter School Commission demonstrates a commitment to ensuring improved student opportunities and outcomes," said Dr. Shelley Redinger, Superintendent of Spokane Public Schools.

The Commission will announce charters that are granted approval no later than February 24, 2014. State law allows for up to eight charter schools to be established each year – for a total of 40 charters over five years.

“We need to provide our kids the best education possible,” said Randy Dorn, Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction. “The Commission has established a process to ensure that only high-quality charter schools are approved.”

The Commission notes that those organizations which did not meet this current deadline, or whose applications may be denied, are welcome to submit proposals in July, 2014. Applicants interested in learning more about how to apply to the Commission can begin by clicking [here](#).

In 2012, Washington voters approved the Washington Charter School Initiative, I-1240, which allowed for the opening of public charter schools for the first time in the state. The initiative also called for the creation of a new, nine-member commission to manage and oversee the new charter school system.

Charter schools are independent public schools operated by non-profit organizations that are allowed more flexibility to be innovative with their educational program and are held accountable for improved student achievement. Broadly, charters must adhere to the same state learning standards, accountability goals, health, safety, and non-discrimination laws, must hire certificated teachers, must follow generally accepted accounting principles and are subject to state financial audits. They are free and open to all students.

About Washington State’s Charter School Commission

Washington State’s Charter School Commission was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and to hold charters accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout Washington with an emphasis on schools designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students, providing leadership and oversight that is consistent with national principles and standards of charter school authorizers and the provisions of Washington’s charter school law. For more information, visit:

<http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/education/commission/>.

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