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## Washington State Charter School Commission Announces Executive Director

*Interim Executive Director Jessica de Barros accepts full-time role in Washington's Charter School Commission, the main authorizer of charter public schools in Washington's multi-part system of oversight and accountability*

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**Olympia, WA** – The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) is pleased to announce it has hired longtime Interim Executive Director Jessica de Barros as its permanent executive director. Ms. de Barros's official start date is February 1, 2023. The executive director reports directly to the Commission, overseeing a staff of seven. The 11-person Commission can serve up to two, four-year terms and are appointed by the governor, State Senate majority, State Senate minority, State House majority and State House minority. Additionally, the State Board of Education and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction each appoint designees to serve on the Commission. The agency also monitors and provides oversight holding schools accountable to high standards of quality.

The Commission's search for an executive director began in the summer of 2021. Ms. de Barros will be the Commission's second-ever permanent executive director, the main authorizer of Washington's charter public school sector which currently has 16 schools serving around 4,800 students statewide. Like traditional public schools, charter public schools are tuition-free, open to all and monitored for compliance with state and federal laws as well as other state agencies such as the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

"We are very pleased to have Jessica accept the executive director role of the Washington Charter School Commission. Her breadth and depth of experience will be invaluable to our work. She has led school systems and worked on public policy at the state and federal level. She also has unique insight to charter public schools as a former Board Chair of a Washington school," **said Chris Korsmo, Commission Chair.** "Like other school and district leaders across the state, we are navigating schools and student outcomes beyond the pandemic, and Jessica's leadership will be essential to ensure charter public schools maintain and build upon the strong education objectives for families who want another public school option for their kids."

Ms. de Barros is the former executive director of Communications, Government and Public Relations for Puget Sound Educational Service District, which supported 44 school systems including urban and rural environments and COVID response and recovery, among other critical skill sets. Her career began in federal policy, working for U.S. Senator Patty Murray on education, workforce, and social policy in the U.S. Congress. Executive Director de Barros has come full circle. She is a graduate of Franklin High School in Seattle and her Master of Public Administration degree is from the University of Washington.

“It is an honor to serve students in our state’s public schools,” **said Ms. de Barros.** “The past year has been an extraordinary experience as we have strived to uphold the strict standards in our state for authorized charter public schools so that they may best serve students in their communities. I look forward to the work ahead with our staff, the Commissioners, school leaders, policymakers, families, and all those dedicated to a successful public school system in Washington.”

Washington State’s Charter School Commission is an independent state agency charged with creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process for qualified non-profits who wish to open a charter public school. The Commission works to ensure that charter public schools are respecting rights of students, staff, and families within the schools as well as the interests of the general public while meeting the legal requirements and obligations of state and federal government. It is committed to closing opportunity gaps between the state’s most and least privileged groups of students within the educational system.

Following a national search in partnership with Kees Alford Executive Search, Ms. de Barros accepted an official offer by the Washington State Charter School Commission after a public vote of the Commission, which includes a compensation package in alignment with analogous public school officials in our state.

**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.

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