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Initiative Provides Support for New Charter Schools in Georgia

The Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative launches to encourage charter school expansion and creation throughout the state.

ATLANTA, GA (statewide) – May 31, 2022 - More Georgia families will soon have the opportunity to send their children to a public school that best meets their individual needs. The Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative will support the expansion, replication, or creation of high-quality public charter schools in communities throughout the state. The initiative will provide technical assistance and grants to support the creation or expansion of ten charter schools by September 2023. In addition, the initiative will offer information sessions and a new dedicated website to allow Georgians to learn more about public charter schools and their public charter school options.

The \$4.1 million Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative was made possible by a grant awarded by the Office of Governor Brian Kemp as part of the Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER II). The new initiative is a partnership between the State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia, the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia, and the Georgia Charter Schools Association. The Charter Growth Initiative comes as Georgia families

seek more quality school opportunities.

“Charter schools have the flexibility and agility to try new approaches and respond quickly to their students’ and communities’ changing needs. Every charter school has a unique educational model, allowing parents to select a school that is right for their children,” said Michele Neely, President of the State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia. “The SCSF is grateful for this grant so that we can remove financial barriers for existing effective charter schools to expand and replicate and new schools to start strong. We look forward to working with our partners to serve communities throughout Georgia that are often overlooked.” The SCSF will serve as the lead organization for the Charter Growth Initiative.

Through the Charter Growth Initiative, new charter schools will receive leadership training and grant funding to assist with startup costs. The initiative will also include technical assistance, long-range planning services, petition development and submission, and grants for expenses related to replication or expansion for existing charter schools in good standing. Grants and cohort participation will be awarded on a competitive basis.

These new, expanding, or replicating public charter schools will be located in one of the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia’s priority communities, with a focus on proposed schools located outside of a high-saturation area, defined as a geographic location containing more than one charter school that serves grades K-5 or 6-8 within a three (3)-mile radius. Schools may seek authorization from any charter school authorizer.

Locations subject to priority consideration include but are not limited to Athens-Clarke County, Macon-Bibb County, Albany-Dougherty County, Augusta-Richmond County, and Columbus, Georgia.

The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia will provide administrative support, program design, supplemental training and data analysis to the initiative.

“Now, more than ever before, Georgia families are seeking options for their children’s education,” said Lauren Holcomb, Executive Director of State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia. “The Charter Growth Initiative will catalyze the vision of the State Charter Schools Commission to advance public education through innovative and superior charter schools in every community.”

The Georgia Charter Schools Association’s Incubator, a program designed to support new and replicating charter schools, will provide assistance to public charter schools that are ready or are planning to replicate or expand with the school design, application, and pre-opening process. GCSA will also provide facilities and finance consulting and communications leadership.

“This crucial initiative will ensure that more Georgia students are prepared for a successful future,” says Tony Roberts, President and CEO of the Georgia Charter Schools Association. “As part of this important grant, the Georgia Charter Schools Association is pleased to support high-quality public charter schools as they work to expand or bring their successful school models to areas of Georgia that are in critical need of additional public school options.”

The Georgia Strategic Charter School Growth Initiative also seeks to educate Georgians about public charter schools and provide information for those seeking to start charter schools in their local communities. The robust communications campaign will include the creation of a public-facing website FindaGaCharter.org. The initial website launched this week and will soon have additional features such as an interactive school locator where Georgia families can search for existing charter schools by location and school theme and view enrollment and lottery details. The website will also contain information for those seeking to start public charter schools in Georgia. Public information sessions about charter schools will be held across the state.

Additional support will be provided by Bellwether Education Partners and the Lead with Excellence Institute. Bellwether will provide technical assistance for replicating & expanding schools to prepare for scaling up. The Lead with Excellence Institute is a fellowship program for leaders of newly authorized

charter schools in their pre-opening year.

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About the State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia

The State Charter Schools Foundation of Georgia (SCSF) is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to supporting high-quality state charter schools serving children throughout Georgia by leveraging resources to help schools launch, build capacity, and grow. For more information about the State Charter Schools Foundation, visit scsfga.org or follow us on social media @SCSFofGA. The SCSF is the charitable foundation for the State Charter Schools Commission.

About the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia

The State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) is Georgia's state-level, independent charter school authorizing board that seeks to improve public education throughout the state by authorizing high-quality charter schools that provide students with better educational opportunities than they would otherwise receive in traditional district schools. Learn more online at scsc.georgia.gov.

About the Georgia Charter Schools Association

The Georgia Charter Schools Association is a nonprofit membership organization for Georgia's public charter schools and petitioners. Our mission is to support, foster and advocate for the development of high-quality public charter schools and networks that improve opportunities for Georgia students. We believe every child in Georgia should have equal access to a quality and transformative public education. Learn more online at gacharters.org.