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## **Parents Join State Charter Association and Ask Supreme Court to Include All Public Schools in Plan for School Facilities Funding**

*Group Calls on State to Fund ALL Public School Construction Needs in Urban Districts, Including 20 Percent of Students Who Attend Public Charter and Renaissance Schools*

NEW JERSEY -- This week, a group of parents from Trenton, Paterson, Newark, and Camden joined the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association in asking the Supreme Court to consider additional facilities funding for all public schools in state-designated low income communities. Both motions were filed in the long-running Abbott v. Burke cases and in response to the Education Law Center's filing seeking additional funding for projects as part of the School Development Authority's 2019 Strategic Plan for Abbott Districts.

"I want what every parent wants for their children - a safe and healthy learning environment, especially during a critical health crisis like this," **said Charlotte Tullo, whose children attend Foundation Academies in Trenton.** "Parents aren't interested in charter versus district labels. We are all parents of public school students living in some of New Jersey's most disadvantaged communities. I am hopeful the court will consider our case and provide the funding we need to keep our kids learning during such a challenging time."

The State Charter Association and the group of parents have refiled motions to join the case by filing "Friends of the Court" or "Amicus" briefs asking the state's highest court to add public charter and renaissance schools to any court-ordered plan for school construction funding, and thereby bring more funding to their cities. Currently, public charter schools serve one in five public school students in New Jersey's 31 poorest communities - former Abbott or SDA districts.

"The Association has long advocated for equitable facilities funding for all public schools," **said Harry Lee, President and CEO of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association.** "One of the key lessons we have learned over the past two years is that every school must have access to resources that will keep their communities safe, healthy, and learning. The COVID-19 pandemic knows no boundaries and is impacting all children regardless of whether they attend district, charter or renaissance schools. We have the unique opportunity to create safe learning environments for all public school students, especially those from low income communities."

### **About the Case**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the New Jersey courts ruled that the education provided to children in poor communities throughout the state was "constitutionally substandard". This created the first "Abbott districts" - school districts that the state was required to fund at the average of the level of the state's wealthiest districts. Today, these districts are known as "SDA districts", because the state's School Development Authority is required to cover the costs of all school building projects within these districts. In the two decades since the Abbott school construction

funding case was first decided, public charter and renaissance schools were created and now educate one out of every five students in these cities. The position of the parent group and the State Charter Association is that all public schools located in these former Abbott Districts should receive equitable funding for school buildings and doing so will bring more resources to those cities.

The table below outlines how much the cities highlighted in the parents' brief have changed since this case was first decided by the state supreme court in 1998:

District	1998-99	2020-21
Camden Charter Enrollment	472	4,922
Camden City District & Renaissance School Enrollment	18,536	11,816
Camden Public Schools Total Enrollment	19,008	16,738
<b>Camden Percent Charter (%)</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>
Paterson Charter Enrollment	0	5,283
Paterson City District Schools Enrollment	24,999	23,356
Paterson Public Schools Total Enrollment	24,999	28,639
<b>Paterson Percent Charter (%)</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>
Newark Charter Enrollment	259	20,095
Newark District Enrollment	43,609	36,405
Newark Public Schools Total Enrollment	43,868	56,500
<b>Newark Percent Charter (%)</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>35.6%</b>
Trenton Charter Enrollment	981	3,236
Trenton District Enrollment	11,971	12,879
Trenton Public Schools Total Enrollment	12,952	16,115
<b>Trenton Percent Charter (%)</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>
Source: Fall Enrollment Data (ENR), NJDOE		

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### About New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association

The New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA) is the non-profit membership association that represents the state's charter school community and, by extension, charter

school students and their parents. There are currently 87 charter schools in New Jersey serving 60,000 students. We are committed to advancing quality public education for New Jersey's children through the cultivation of excellent public charter schools. The Association seeks to influence legislative and policy environments, leverage collective advocacy, and provide resources to support our members in developing and operating high quality, public charter schools.