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**New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association Welcomes  
Theodore (T.J.) Best as its Government Affairs Director**

*Danielle West-Augustin and Bob Guarasci join the Association's Board*

**Hamilton, NJ** — Today, Harry Lee, President and CEO of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA), announced that Theodore (T.J.) Best will join the Association as its new Director of Government Affairs.

“T.J. is a dedicated public servant who has been a tireless advocate for improving educational outcomes for all kids throughout his career,” said Lee. “His depth of experience and knowledge of government and New Jersey’s educational system is unparalleled. He is a bold and innovative leader who is not afraid to reimagine what education can look like in the Garden State.”

Best brings with him 18 years of public policy and education experience. Born and raised in Paterson, Best has served on the Paterson Board of Education and is the youngest Freeholder to be elected in Passaic County. Prior to joining the Association, he worked for the New Jersey Department of Education as a monitor for the Paterson School District. Best holds a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree from Rutgers University.

“I am a parent who has a child in a traditional public school as well as in a public charter school. I am fortunate to live in a community that has allowed my family to choose the best educational fit for each of my children,” said Best. “I have seen firsthand the impact that public charter schools have on students, their families, and the community at large. Sadly, there are more than 35,000 students on charter school waiting lists throughout New Jersey. I am honored to join NJPCSA and fight for those students languishing on wait lists because every child deserves a fair shot at a great education. I can’t wait to roll-up my sleeves and get to work making sure our public charter schools’ voices are heard in the halls of the State House and all around New Jersey.”

In addition to T.J. Best joining NJPCSA as its Government Affairs Director, Lee welcomed two new board members, Danielle West-Augustin and Robert “Bob” Guarasci.

Danielle West-Augustin serves as the Chief Academic Officer and Director of Queen City Academy Charter School, high-performing public charter school in Plainfield. She has over 20 years of experience as an educator. West-Augustin holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services from Lincoln University and a Master’s of Arts in Educational Administration degree from Saint Peter’s College. Danielle is also an esteemed member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa.

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West-Augustin added, “I am honored to join the NJPCSA Board of Trustees to continue advocating for access and equity on behalf of the scholars and families that we serve. During these unprecedented times, I know that the Association and this Board will take the lead in making sure that New Jersey scholars have a seat at the table.”

Robert “Bob” Guarasci is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Community Development Corporation, an organization’s whose mission is to create opportunities and to transform lives in Paterson. Additionally, he is a founder of Community Charter School of Paterson, a high-quality community-centered K-8 school that serves 800 students. Prior to starting NJCDC, he served for four years as Executive Assistant to New Jersey’s Commissioner of Human Services. Bob also serves as a gubernatorial appointee to the Board of Trustees of William Paterson University and the Paterson Housing Authority.

“I am proud to join the NJPCSA Board and add my voice to a distinguished group of advocates who understand that charter schools change lives and communities,” said Guarasci.

“Danielle and Bob embody the spirit of community and public service,” said Lee. “Their experience coupled with their endless enthusiasm and wise counsel will be tremendous assets to NJPCSA. We are extremely fortunate that Danielle and Bob join an already energetic board that is deeply committed to empowering, parents, teachers and communities.”

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### **About Public Charter Schools**

Charter schools are tuition-free public schools run by non-profit organizations open to all students regardless of zip code, race/ethnicity or ability level. Charter schools operate with more flexibility than traditional public schools in exchange for increased accountability and high financial, academic and managerial standards by an authorizer. A “charter” is a contract with an authorizer detailing the school’s mission, program, performance goals and methods of assessments. In New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Education serves as the sole authorizer and oversees all public charter schools in the state.

### **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 approximately 57,000 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.