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NEWS RELEASE

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Rhode Island Race to the Top Team Heads to Washington Delegation of Government, Community Leaders Voices Support for Grant Application

When Governor Donald L. Carcieri and Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist lead a team to Washington Tuesday (August 10) to make the case for the Rhode Island Race to the Top application, a delegation of Rhode Island leaders in government, education, business, and the nonprofit community will also travel to the capital to speak with national leaders on education policy on behalf of Race to the Top.

Today (Friday, August 6), members of the delegation and others gathered to show their unified support for the Rhode Island Race to the Top application. Last week, the U.S. Department of Education named Rhode Island as one of 19 finalists for Race to the Top Phase 2 funds, which could bring \$75 million to the state to support educators and to improve student achievement.

"Our Phase 2 application has been strengthened significantly by a broader base of support among school districts and stakeholders, and by new policies that reflect our steadfast commitment to reform and school improvement. Thanks to the hard work of the Rhode Island Department of Education staff and the spirit of collaboration that has characterized the application process, we are submitting an application that truly demonstrates Rhode Island's ability and will to transform our education system," said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. "Race to the Top funds would allow us to more quickly translate our world-class standards into world-class results for our students and for our state."

House Speaker Gordon Fox noted, "I am confident the excellent vision for our education system that is articulated so powerfully in this proposal will be recognized in Washington. With the General Assembly's enactment of a funding formula, the additional support from the teachers' unions, and the new broad-based input that was provided as part of this application, I am very hopeful that Rhode Island will stand out from the 18 other finalists as a leader in the education reform movement."

President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed added, "With great pleasure I join Governor Carcieri, Education Commissioner Gist, Speaker Fox, Chairwoman Gallo, Mayor Cicilline and several other officials in support of our Race to the Top application. We've made great strides this year with the passage of a fair and equitable state-wide education funding formula after over a decade of hard work. The future success of Rhode Island is dependent upon the quality of education we offer to students of today and I am hopeful that these funds would go a long way in helping us to ensure that our public schools are second-to-none. I am optimistic that Washington will recognize our progress so far and help us continue on this journey to excellence through the approval of our Race to the Top application."

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Neil D. Steinberg, President and CEO of The Rhode Island Foundation and a member of the delegation that will travel to Washington with the Rhode Island team, reiterated the Foundation's support for Race to the Top. "Public education is one of the Foundation's top priorities and a key to economic development in Rhode Island," he stated. "This is an auspicious moment for our state. Winning this race will enhance support for the Commissioner's ambitious plans to transform our system of public education."

"I can't imagine a stronger application than the one we have submitted, and I can't imagine a better team to present our case than Governor Carcieri, Commissioner Gist, and the others here today," said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "Our goal is to make sure that our students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in college and in challenging careers. We are already on the way toward achieving these goals. Race to the Top could bring \$75 million to Rhode Island get us there faster, and I am sure that Washington will recognize our achievements and reward us with Race to the Top."

Amber Johnson, a 17-year-old Board member of Young Voices, said "It so amazing how far we have come, where everyone is working together to make sure young people get the education they need and deserve. I also deeply appreciate that young people themselves have had a voice at the table and will continue to do so as the process moves forward".

"When I began my service as education commissioner in Rhode Island a little more than a year ago, I knew that the state was poised to take a leap toward greatness," said Commissioner Gist. "The foundation for true education excellence was in place, and I was sure that Rhode Island was ready for rapid growth. Today, I am confident that we have the momentum, the sense of urgency, and the courage to do this right. Thanks to the many Rhode Islanders who are supporting our Race to the Top application, we will advance learning for all students and make Rhode Island the home of America's best public schools."

Rhode Island would use Race to the Top funds to develop:

- world-class standards and assessments;
- user-friendly data systems to improve instruction;
- mentoring and training for all teachers and school leaders;
- educator evaluation systems to improve teacher effectiveness; and
- systems of support for the lowest-achieving schools.

Among the specific proposals in the Rhode Island Race to the Top application are:

- training for educators regarding new world-class standards;
- training in the use of data to improve instruction;
- support for a new system that will track education data over multiple years;
- information for teachers and families on student growth and achievement at the classroom, school, and district levels;
- data and other support for an educator-evaluation system that we will design in partnership with educators;
- support toward developing new models of teacher compensation;
- stronger induction programs for new teachers and school leaders;
- training in the management of human resources;
- development of a deeper applicant pool for subjects that are hard to staff;
- increased supports for principals and teacher leaders; and
- partnerships with professional organizations that have proven records of success.

A team of reviewers at the U.S. Department of Education will interview and question the Rhode Island team on Tuesday, August 10, at 1:30 p.m. The Rhode Island team includes: Governor Carcieri, Commissioner Gist, Chief Academic Officer of the Providence Public Schools Sharon Contreras, and, from RIDE, Deputy Commissioner David V. Abbott, Chief of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness Mary Ann Snider, and, as alternate, Chief Transformation Officer Jennifer Smith.

The delegation traveling to Washington in support of Race to the Top includes:

- House Speaker Gordon Fox
- Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed
- Representative Douglas Gablinske, Chair, Subcommittee on Education
- Senator Hanna Gallo, Chairwoman, Committee on Education
- Mayor Cicilline, Providence
- Mayor McKee, Cumberland
- Steve Smith, President, Providence Teachers' Union
- Judy Jenkins, Co-President, Foster NEA
- Jean Harnois , President, RI Association of School Committees
- Julie Nora, President, RI League of Charter Schools
- Angus Davis, Board of Regents
- Neil Steinberg, President & CEO, Rhode Island Foundation
- Staff Facilitator, Jennifer Smith, Rhode Island Department of Education

They will meet with, Kati Haycock, President of the Education Trust, Scott Palmer, partner and co-founder of EducationCounsel LLC, and Sandi Jacobs, Vice President, the National Council on Teacher Quality.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan will announce the winners of Race to the Top next month. He has said he expects to award the grants to about 12 states.