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### **Fifty-One Charter Schools To Open Their Doors for 2001-2002 School Year**

Fifty-one charter schools, including consolidated charter schools, will open their doors in New Jersey for the 2001-2002 school year — the fifth year the state's charter school law has been in place. The 51 charter schools will serve more than 13,400 students. Another eight charter schools that had previously been approved will open their doors in September 2002.

"Charter schools have become an important part of the state's public education system," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "They offer an important choice to parents who may be looking for a different educational option for their children.

"One clear indication of the demand for charter schools is that there are more than 5,400 children on waiting lists to attend. In many cases, parents unquestionably believe that charter schools represent a better education option for their children than the traditional public schools."

Since New Jersey's charter school law was enacted in 1996, the state has received more than 200 applications from groups interested in starting their own schools. Most recently the state received 18 applications from groups interested in opening schools in either September 2002 or September 2003. These applications will receive an extensive review from the department during the next five months. Commissioner Gagliardi will then announce the successful applicants in the current round on or about January 15, 2002.

"Charter schools are truly laboratories of innovation," said Dr. Gagliardi. "School founders can try new educational approaches that, if successful, can then be used in all public schools."

Under the law, the Commissioner has the authority to grant a charter for a four-year period and to renew initial charters for a five-year-period. Currently, the charter school law is undergoing an independent review that is required by the statute. A report will be prepared and submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by October 1, 2001.