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**CONTACT:** Dominic Slowey  
781-710-0014  
Marc Kenen  
617-851-8831

**STATEMENT ON REPORTS OF POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN THE AWARDING OF A  
NEW CHARTER IN GLOUCESTER**

*(Statement can be attributed to Marc Kenen, MCPSA Executive Director)*

**BOSTON, MA – September 21, 2009** – The Massachusetts Charter Public School Association is deeply troubled by reports that Education Secretary Paul Reville exerted political pressure on the state’s Education Commissioner to recommend the approval of a new charter public school in Gloucester.

Political interference – whether by charter opponents or supporters – weakens the integrity of the chartering process and cheapens the hard work and commitment of charter applicants.

The sanctity of the chartering process must not be sacrificed to further anyone’s political agenda. Massachusetts is recognized around the country as having an open, transparent chartering process and high standards of accountability. This is one reason we have some of the best charter public schools in the country.

Any political interference with respect to the Gloucester application tarnishes this process and raises serious questions about not only the approval of the Gloucester application, but also the rejection of the Brockton application last year, which was opposed by very powerful local political leaders, who exerted an enormous amount of pressure on the Patrick Administration to reject it.

Caught in the middle of all this is a group of dedicated citizens in Gloucester, who put in countless hours to craft a credible proposal to bring a new type of public school to the city’s children. Not only have they been ridiculed and ostracized by government and school officials from their own city throughout the process, but now they must endure additional questions about the validity of their charter.

The chartering process must remain immune from political interference at the local or state level. That is one reason why local communities do not – and should not – have veto power over charter applications or renewals. Final decisions must continue to be made by the independent Board of Elementary and Secondary Education based on the criteria laid out in the law.

We have stood by this process for more than 15 years, whether decisions have resulted in approval or rejection of particular charter applications, and it has served the children of Massachusetts well. We will continue to work to ensure that this process is not corrupted.

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