News for Immediate Release

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Secretary of Education Denies Charters to Eight Cyber Charter School Applicants for 2013-14 School Year

Harrisburg – Citing significant deficiencies in curriculum, finance and overall operations, Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis today denied eight cyber charter school applications for the 2013-14 school year.

"The proposals submitted by the applicants lack adequate evidence and sufficient information of how prospective students would be offered quality academic programs," Tomalis said. "In addition, the financial plans presented call into question each applicant's ability to maintain a long-term, viable educational program for the benefit of Pennsylvania students."

As required by the Charter School Law, the Department of Education is responsible for oversight of cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania, including the granting and revocation of a charter.

In late November, public hearings were held over a four-day period to provide each applicant an opportunity to defend its proposal and undergo questioning by department staff.

Based on a thorough review of the applications and the information obtained during the hearings, Tomalis denied the applications and noted the following deficiencies in each proposal:

Akoben Cyber Charter School, Philadelphia County: application requirements, sustainable support, use of physical school facilities, governance, finance, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development and teacher induction, special education, technology, and comprehensive planning and school improvement.

Insight PA Cyber Charter School, Delaware County: sustainable support, governance, application requirements, use of physical school facilities, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development and teacher development, finance, special education, technology, individualized learning plan, and comprehensive planning and adequate yearly progress.

MB Resiliency Cyber Charter School, Philadelphia County: application requirements, sustainable support, use of physical school facilities, governance, finance,

curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development, teacher induction, special education, technology and comprehensive planning.

Mercury Online Cyber Charter School, Dauphin County: application requirements, sustainable support, governance, finance, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development and teacher induction, special education, technology, and comprehensive planning and school improvement.

Pennsylvania Career Path Cyber Charter School, Lehigh County: application requirements, governance, sustainable support, use of physical facilities, Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development and teacher induction, finance, special education, technology, assessment, and planning and school improvement.

PHASE 4 America Cyber Charter School, Allegheny County: application requirements, sustainable support, use of physical school facilities, governance, finance, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional Development, teacher induction, special education, technology and comprehensive planning.

Urban Cyber Charter School, York County: application requirements, governance, use of physical school facilities, Family Educational Rights and Privacy, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development and teacher induction, finance, special education, technology, and planning and school improvement.

V3 Cyber Charter School, Dauphin County: application requirements, sustainable support, use of physical school facilities, governance, model for other public school, finance, curriculum, English as a Second Language, professional development and teacher induction, special education, technology, student assessment, and comprehensive planning and school improvement.

An additional factor in the denials is that many of the applicants proposed to use learning centers in a way that blurred the line between a brick-and-mortar and cyber charter school.

Tomalis noted that a fundamental difference exists between brick-and-mortar and cyber charter schools and learning centers are not to be used as an alternative to the brick-and-mortar model.

Each applicant has the option to address the deficiencies and resubmit the application to the department for reconsideration or appeal the decision to the State Charter Appeal Board.

Editor's Note: Each denial letter can be accessed by visiting www.education.state.pa.us and clicking on the "2013-14 Cyber Charter School Decisions" graphic.

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