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PENNSYLVANIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE APPLAUDS GOVERNOR CORBETT'S SCHOOL CHOICE PLAN

"School choice reinforces that parents – not the state – are the primary educators of their children"

HARRISBURG (October 11) – The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) reiterates the Catholic community's support of school choice and applauds Governor Tom Corbett who today announced his plan to create a school voucher program and increase the already successful Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program.

Philadelphia's Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Chairman of the PCC said "It was very encouraging to hear Governor Corbett voice his support for the school voucher program and more EITC scholarship funding. His words should serve as a clarion call to the people of Pennsylvania. As citizens, we face a pivotal opportunity to improve the lives and enrich the minds of our children. School choice is the right choice for Pennsylvania. It will give families the freedom to educate their children as they see fit, and it offers real alternatives for underprivileged families who seek to give their children a chance to succeed."

Under the governor's school choice plan, parents would have access to more educational options for their children. EITC scholarships that already allow low and middle income parents to send their children to non-public schools would expand. With vouchers, qualified parents could move their children from a failing school to another public school, a charter school or a non-public school.

"The Catholic community agrees with Governor Corbett's call for action – students deserve access to educational opportunities that work for their learning needs and parents have the right to choose the school that is best for their child," said Robert J. O'Hara, Jr., Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference. "Economic or social barriers often prevent families from accessing the educational options that would be best for them. A mandatory system in which students are assigned to a school based solely on geographic location is unjust and inequitable for many students, especially those in low-income families."

"Two weeks ago, the Catholic Bishops of Pennsylvania called school choice 'a defining social justice issue for our society.' Educating each and every child to his or her potential is our moral obligation," added O'Hara. "The Bishops do not see school choice as a public versus non-public school issue, but a family and child issue. Each family should have a full range of educational options for their children; it is a civil right for every parent.

Pennsylvania's 500 plus Catholic schools together are the largest provider of non-public education in the Commonwealth. These schools educate both Catholics and non-Catholics in an academically excellent and nurturing environment. This essential service not only helps to create new generations of productive and engaged citizens, but also by saves over \$4 billion tax dollars annually.

More information about the PCC's advocacy for school choice is available at www.pacatholic.org.

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