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## Our Children/Our Schools Campaign

September 14, 2007

Lucille E. Davy, Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Education  
100 Riverview Plaza  
P.O. Box 500  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0500

Dear Commissioner Davy:

The undersigned organizations\* have reviewed the report issued on August 17, 2007 by KPMG, entitled *New Jersey Department of Education Performance Audit Final Report* which contains the findings of the evaluation of the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) ordered by Joint Resolution 3. The report findings portray an agency that is in serious disarray, disconnected internally, and with critical external partners, and incapable of carrying out basic legal and educational responsibilities under NJQSAC and CORE, two major education initiatives now underway. The report also makes clear that the reorganization of the NJDOE, instituted earlier this year, is insufficient to address the systemic problems in the governance, workflow procedures, staffing, technology, and communications at the NJDOE, as documented by KPMG in the evaluation report.

We recommend the following actions be taken to address these fundamental organizational deficits:

1. Corrective Action Plan: In light of the need for urgent action, it is imperative to immediately begin work on a detailed NJDOE corrective action management plan. The process for preparing this plan must be open and transparent, in order to begin to rebuild public confidence in the agency. A panel of key stakeholders should be convened by Governor Corzine to guide the development and completion of the action plan, and outside expertise should be retained in order to formulate and identify both short and long term solutions, based on best management practices elsewhere in the corporate and government sectors. It is essential that the corrective action be developed as soon as possible in collaboration with the State Board of Education, Legislature, Governor's Office, and concerned education stakeholder groups.
2. Rescheduling and Restaging NJQSAC Implementation: The NJDOE is legally mandated under the NJQSAC law, the Fiscal Monitoring law, the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and the *Abbott v. Burke* rulings to have in place a system of

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\* Education Law Center (ELC), Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey (HDANJ), League of Women Voters of New Jersey (LWVNJ), the New Jersey Black Issues Convention (NJBIC), New Jersey Education Organizing Coalition (NJEOC), and the Statewide Education Organizing Committee (SEOC).

accountability that will ensure the effective functioning of our state's public schools and improve student performance in those schools. The KPMG evaluation documents that the NJDOE presently is simply incapable of carrying out its essential responsibilities, particularly those mandated in NJQSAC. NJDOE has not assigned a staff team that is responsible for NJQSAC implementation; has no formalized internal process for implementing NJQSAC; and has not developed or issued guidance or training on NJQSAC for affected districts or NJDOE staff. NJDOE is also already falling short of its obligations under NJQSAC to provide technical assistance during the development of the district improvement plans, and lacks staff capacity to conduct the in-depth evaluations and offer necessary technical assistance as required by law. We call on you to immediately convene affected stakeholders to review the current timetable for NJQSAC implementation, and make appropriate adjustments to allow for the time necessary for NJDOE to address the serious deficiencies outlined by KPMG and be better positioned to fulfill its legal and educational responsibilities under the law.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with you, your designees, members of the State Legislature, the Governor's Office, other concerned stakeholders, and qualified consultants to support the immediate systemic improvement of the NJDOE. We encourage you not to delay this process and to contact us immediately to discuss these comments further and move forward with corrective action.

Sincerely,

Education Law Center  
Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey  
League of Women Voters of New Jersey  
New Jersey Black Issues Convention  
New Jersey Education Organizing Collaborative  
Paterson Education Fund  
Statewide Education Organizing Committee

C. Governor Jon Corzine  
Robert Gilson, Director, Division of Law  
Heather Howard, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor  
Janellen Duffy, Education Policy Aide, Office of the Governor  
Fruqan Mouzon, Assistant Counsel, Office of the Governor  
John Hart, Chief of Staff, New Jersey Department of Education