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SECRETARY SPELLINGS ANNOUNCES \$8.3 MILLION CHARTER SCHOOLS GRANT TO CIVIC BUILDERS

Funds to be used to build and renovate charter schools in New York and New Jersey

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings today announced an \$8.3 million grant to Civic Builders, Inc. (Civic) as part of the U.S. Department of Education's Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Grants Program. The grant will be used to help build and renovate charter schools in New York and New Jersey.

Making the announcement at the New York City Department of Education Tweed Courthouse, Secretary Spellings was joined by New York City Department of Education Chancellor Joel Klein and Newark, New Jersey Mayor Cory Booker, as she presented a check to David Umansky, co-founder and CEO of Civic.

"Charter schools continue to offer parents and students across the country viable alternatives for choosing where they want to get their education," said Secretary Spellings. "This program helps ensure that funds are available to help secure the facilities needed to house charter schools. It's no secret that one of the toughest obstacles to starting a charter school is finding the building to house it in."

"Securing facilities is one of the most challenging obstacles for charters schools, especially here in New York City where space is tight and real estate is expensive," noted Chancellor Klein. "I want to thank Secretary Spellings for this grant and congratulate Civic Builders, which has been doing great work building charter school facilities here."

"The City of Newark expresses its thanks and gratitude to the U.S. Department of Education and Secretary Margaret Spellings for providing federal grant money to build and renovate charter schools in Newark," added Mayor Booker. "It has been a priority of my administration to widen the avenues of opportunity and forge relationships that will enable our young people to excel and reach the heights of their greatest potential. This grant program will strengthen our charter schools and provide our families with greater choices in determining the course of their children's education."

The Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities program provides assistance to help charter schools meet their facility needs.

Under this grant program, funds are provided on a competitive basis to public and nonprofit entities, and consortia of those entities, to improve the credit of charter schools to allow them to obtain financing for school facilities. Including today's announcement, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded more than \$205 million in Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities program grants across the U.S.

Civic Builders, Inc. is a nonprofit facilities developer that provides "turnkey" real estate solutions for high-performing charter schools, prioritizing development of charter facilities in urban neighborhoods that will benefit most from the additional choices charter schools offer. By assuming responsibility for building financing, acquisition, design and construction, Civic relieves charter schools of the burden of navigating a complex real estate market and provides affordable educational facilities. Civic's work supports the success of charter schools by enabling school administrators to focus their time and resources on the important work of educating children and using development strategies that positively influence larger educational reform efforts.

Despite the popularity of charter schools with parents, teachers and the public, these distinctive public schools often face barriers. A high percentage of new charter schools point out that inadequate facilities have impeded the implementation of their charters. Unlike traditional local education agencies, charter schools generally lack the ability to issue general obligation bonds backed by property taxes, and they are often perceived to be credit risks by lenders.

The Credit Enhancement for Charter Schools Facilities grants help to improve educational options for students and parents by targeting funds to areas with the greatest need for public school choice.

For more information on the Credit Enhancement for Charter Schools Facilities grant program, visit www.ed.gov/programs/charterfacilities/index.html <<http://www.ed.gov/programs/charterfacilities/index.html>>.

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