



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Secretary of Education Must Ensure That Charters Educate Students With Disabilities As They Do Any Other Students

Washington, D.C. – In response to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee hearing regarding the nomination of Betsy DeVos as the Secretary of Education, Lauren Morando Rhim, executive director and co-founder of the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) released the following statement:

“Implementation and enforcement of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) is a federal responsibility. While states have some discretion in how they serve students with disabilities, states do not and should not have a right to decide whether to implement IDEA. While we support choice, charters and innovation that can lead to better outcomes for all students, the U.S. Department of Education cannot shirk its responsibility to ensure all students’ federally-defined civil rights are upheld.

300,000 students with disabilities are enrolled in public charter schools. The rights of these students under IDEA must be understood, promoted and enforced by the Secretary of Education. While we are disappointed that the nominee, to date, seems unclear on the federal-to-state relationship that the IDEA requires, we urge the Senate to conduct a thorough vetting and require the nominee to clarify she will enforce existing federal laws.

NCSECS is the only organization focused on the intersection of charter schools and special education. NCSECS helps the charter sector fulfil its responsibility of providing a quality education to all students eligible for special education services. We are committed to working with the new Administration and our partners in both the charter school and special education communities to protect the rights of students with disabilities across the nation. A partnership with the Secretary of Education and staff at the U.S. Department of Education is critical to ensuring students with disabilities have the same opportunities as any other child to enroll in a charter school and receive the instruction and support they need to achieve their full potential.”

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The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools is dedicated to ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to charter schools and that public charter schools are designed and operated to enable all students to succeed. www.ncsecs.org