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ARIZONA CHARTER LAW RANKED #10 IN THE NATION

National Organization Releases Report Emphasizing Quality and Accountability in Arizona's Charter Sector

PHOENIX, AZ. (January 13, 2010) According to a report released today by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (the Alliance) entitled "*How State Charter Laws Rank Against The New Model Public Charter School Law*," the state of Arizona ranks #10 when evaluated on its commitment to the full range of values in the public charter school movement. Those values include quality and accountability, funding equity, facilities support, autonomy, and growth and choice.

According to Vice President of Policy for the Alliance and the report author, Todd Ziebarth, "Arizona has long been known for having an environment relatively supportive of charter growth. It is cap-free, open to new start-ups, public school conversions and virtual schools, and generally supportive autonomy. Recently, it has also begun making strides on some aspects of the model law's quality and accountability components, which helped ensure its place in our Top 10."

The report also pointed out that Arizona's laws could be improved upon by allowing equitable access to capital funding and facilities for charter schools. Charter students in Arizona are underfunded, on average, 20 % less than their district counterparts. The Arizona Charter Schools Association recently spearheaded two lawsuits that are currently pending against the state of Arizona on the subject of equitable student funding. The suits were filed by parents of both low-wealth district and charter public school children challenging Arizona's system of K-12 school funding.

"As one of the pioneering states of the national charter movement, we are pleased that Arizona is being recognized for its charter-friendly environment," said Eileen Sigmund, CEO of the Arizona Charter Schools Association. "However there is still much work to be done on behalf of Arizona's more than 100,000 charter students. Our Association will continue to work alongside lawmakers, the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools to see that Arizona is ranked #1 for improving student achievement through high-quality charter schools that are accountable to the students and parents they serve."

The report was written by the Alliance in June 2009 as a benchmark for states looking to improve, or create a charter school law. The 39 states, plus the District of Columbia, with charter school laws were compared against the 20 model law components to determine which states had the strongest charter school laws and which were in need of improvement. The top ten states shown to support the growth of high-quality charter schools are: Minnesota (152), D.C. (131), California (130), Georgia (130), Colorado (128), Massachusetts (125), Utah (123), New York (121), Louisiana (120), and Arizona (120).

Arizona enacted its original charter law in 1994. Fifteen years later, in 2009-2010, the state has 502 charter schools serving more than 100,000 students.

The complete analysis can be downloaded at the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' website: www.publiccharters.org/charterlawrankings. See detailed state-by-state summaries and color-coded maps of how states measure against each component at www.charterlaws.publiccharters.org.

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About The Arizona Charter Schools Association

Founded in 1995, the Arizona Charter Schools Association was reinvigorated in July 2007. In the past year, the reconfigured Association has established itself as a strong advocate and significant resource for quality for the state's 475 charter schools. The Association is dedicated to high student achievement through quality charter schools and works with their members on issues such as legislation, school advocacy, parent and student rights, as well as research and development on a local and national level.

For more information, visit www.azcharters.org or call 602.944.0644 ext. 304.