



For Immediate Release:

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State Board of Education Approves Updated Plan for Booker T. Washington Academy Charter School

*State monitoring, enrollment revisions, shorter charter term,
and background checks among conditions required by Department of Education*

(HARTFORD, CT)— The Connecticut State Board of Education approved a modified state charter for New Haven's Booker T. Washington Academy (BTWA) at a special meeting today in Hartford. The approval enables BTWA to open its doors this September to serve 120 kindergarten and first grade students. BTWA, which will enroll students from across New Haven, will focus its student recruitment on students living in poverty, especially from the high-need, underserved Dixwell-Newhallville neighborhood.

State Board of Education Chairman Allan Taylor said: "The school's updated application includes thoughtful modifications in structure and supports that, in tandem with additional State conditions, offer great potential for another high-quality public school option in New Haven. I congratulate the founding leadership team for their persistence and ability to adapt in time to serve children for the upcoming school year."

The original BTWA charter identified Family Urban Schools of Excellence, Inc. (FUSE) as its non-profit charter school management organization. On June 29, 2014, however, the BTWA governing board elected to end its relationship with FUSE, and to plan a school that would operate without the support of a charter management organization.

The State Board of Education's approval of a revised charter today was granted with a number of conditions, including: 1) the BTWA charter term was changed from five years, the norm for new charter schools, to three years, spanning the period from July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2017; 2) the school is required to report to the State Board of Education by September 2015 regarding its first year of academic, financial, and operational systems and performance; 3) the school's enrollment was reduced from 225 to 120 seats for the 2014-15 school year, serving grades kindergarten and Grade 1; and 4) the school must participate in regular site visits, other monitoring processes, and technical assistance so that the Connecticut State Department of Education's Turnaround and Charter School Offices can provide intensive and periodic assistance to ensure high-quality operations.

Additionally, the State Board of Education authorized release of BTWA's charter upon receipt of documentation validating that the school has conducted background checks of all school employees and governing board members, consistent with the Department's recent preliminary revisions to its charter school policies, and assurances that the school will financially viable.

Currently, there are 18 state charter schools in operation in Connecticut serving 7,096 students, representing 1.3% of public school students. In total, there are 1,151 public schools and programs serving 545,614 public school students in Connecticut.

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