



**Maine Association for Charter Schools**  
199 Hatchet Mountain Road  
Hope, Maine 04847  
207-763-3576  
[www.mainecharterschools.org](http://www.mainecharterschools.org)

## **MACS Newsletter - November 2009**

**First the good news!** MACS has been notified that we will receive a grant from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools that will allow us to fund a full-time Community Organizer Position. Additionally, the National Alliance is providing major in kind support in the areas of website development, public relations, advertising, and communications. We are in regular contact with five staff members based across the country.

**Unfortunately,** there is some not so good news. On November 9<sup>th</sup> Commissioner Gendron's announced that Maine would skip Round One of the Race to the Top grant competition, and wait instead until Round Two which begins in June.

A week later, on November 17, Commissioner Gendron announced that Governor Baldacci would not be presenting a charter school bill to the legislature during the second session.

MACS issued a statement and sent out a state-wide press release expressing our disappointment in the Governor's decision. (See Below).

### **ACTION ALERT - All Hands on Deck!**

MACS is working with the National Alliance to alert our supporters statewide to take five minutes and send Governor Baldacci a clear message that he needs to change his mind.

Using the Alliance website, supporters can quickly send a pre-written message (which they can customize for themselves if they wish) to Governor Baldacci, with copies also sent to their own Senator and House Representative (according to the address they submit online).

**[Please Click Here for More Information](#)**

### **MACS' Press Release - November 19, 2009**

#### **Maine Risks Losing Large Federal Grants**

Maine Commissioner of Education Susan Gendron announced on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> that Governor Baldacci will not introduce a bill to allow public charter schools during the 2010 legislative session. Many Maine families and educators look to public charter schools to bring more innovation and more options to Maine's public education system.

The Governor's decision dashes their hopes, and also risks Maine's access to millions of dollars in federal grants for public education during a time of increasingly severe budget shortfalls.

Maine is eligible for up to \$75 million, and possibly more, in the federal Race to the Top grant competition for \$4.35 billion for education reform. Maine has been warned by Washington, however, that without charter school legislation, the state's chances of receiving any Race to the Top grant will be seriously handicapped.

By changing course and introducing enabling legislation, Governor Baldacci could still change the odds dramatically. Maine would show it is serious about finding new ways to improve student outcomes. Maine could lead the 11 states without a charter school law. Maine could also lead the nation by passing a strong law. The bill currently proposed is the first based on a new model bill that reflects best practices learned from 18 years of charter school experience in other states.

Other federal grant money is also at stake. The Charter School Grant Program awards about \$450,000 to each new or conversion public charter school for planning and startup expenses. The Maine Department of Education would get 5% to administer a charter school program. These grants would bring new resources to districts to help at risk students.

President Obama has called for the expansion of public charter schools to promote educational innovation nationwide. The Race to the Top funds could be used to support dozens of innovative educational initiatives in Maine that address children's needs.

If Maine's Race to the Top application in Round Two is not successful, Maine taxpayers will still be paying their share of the \$4.35 billion education stimulus grants for generations to come. But the benefits will go to other states.

There are now 4,900 charter schools educating 1.5 million students in forty other states. Voluntary public charter schools have been called the most significant educational reform since "The Nation at Risk" was published in 1983. They are open enrollment schools with no admissions tests, non-religious, and free to parents.

There is growing support in the Maine House and Senate for using public charter schools as a powerful tool to help meet the significant, growing needs of Maine's children. The Governor could make a major contribution by changing his position and introducing, promoting, and signing into law high quality charter school legislation during the 2010 legislative session.

FMI about the benefits of the charter school model in public education, how it is working in 40 other states, and how these options could work in Maine, see [www.mainecharterschools.org](http://www.mainecharterschools.org).

### **MACS' at the Moment ...**

- A complete summary of the October 14 Maine Forum on Public Charter Schools hosted by MACS was included in our October Newsletter, which is posted on our website. Briefly, the forum brought national experts together with Maine educators and others interested in the possibilities of allow public charter schools in Maine. About 40 people shared information about the charter school model in public education, ideas for encouraging related innovative public programs, and experience with public charter schools in other states. The heightened interest among participants was clear from the questions and networking during the meeting, and the forum was covered by several print and television reporters.
- MACS is building its organizational capacity as a Charter School Support Organization (CSO), by recruiting additional board members, hiring additional office staff, and

expanding its network of volunteers to spread the word about the importance of public charter school options.

We would like to introduce our new Administrative Assistant, Anne Howell, who has been working with us in our office since September. Anne lives in nearby Appleton with her husband and daughter. We are so fortunate to have her on our team!

- MACS is working to build a coalition with other Maine organizations who support public school choice as a means to addressing educational, social, and economic issues through the public charter school model.
- MACS is seeking donations and grants to support our efforts - our immediate goal is still to get quality charter school legislation passed in Maine during the second legislative session which begins in January.

Our **Donor Link** is now active on the MACS website, so people may contribute to our efforts quickly and easily. Thanks to all who do!

The recently published edition of "Philanthropy Roundtable" urges individuals and foundations to support charter schools and charter school support organizations. "Investing in Charter Schools – A Guide for Donors," [www.philanthropyroundtable.org](http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org).

*"Experience in other states has shown that a strong charter school support organization such as MACS is critical to a strong state charter school program, not only to educate about, and to advocate for, high-quality public charter schools; but also, to counter the continued efforts of opponents with vested interests in the current system, who would deny students, parents, and educators charter school options within public education"*

Thank you so much for your interest in, and support of, our work in bringing charter schools to Maine. Please contact us with your questions and your ideas - and do let us know if you are able to make a donation of either time or money in support of our continuing, vitally important efforts on behalf of Maine children.

***MANY THANKS!***

***Roger & Judith***

Roger W. Brainerd, MEd.  
Judith D. Jones, PhD.

Executive Director  
Board Chair