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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Education Committee Endorses Charter Schools with  
Bipartisan Vote**

**AUGUSTA** – The Legislature’s Education and Cultural Affairs Committee today voted to support the creation of public charter schools in Maine.

In a bipartisan vote, nine members of the committee supported LD 1553, “An Act to Create a Public Charter School Program in Maine,” as amended; three members voted to carry the bill over until next year; and one member voted in favor of a different version of the legislation. One member was absent.

“With bipartisan support, the Education Committee has recognized that public charter schools can help to improve education in Maine,” said Roger Brainerd, executive director of the Maine Association for Charter Schools. “After a thorough public hearing, the Education Committee made changes to the legislation that made it stronger, and builds a strong foundation for public charter schools in Maine.”

The legislation allows local school districts, regional collaboratives and a new State Charter Commission to authorize public charter schools in Maine.

Public charter schools are voluntary public schools and cannot teach religious practices and cannot discriminate against students or teachers. They must adhere to state and federal academic requirements.

They also must meet rigorous academic standards. Since they are held accountable for student improvement, they are given the flexibility to adapt their curriculum, school schedules, and to be innovative in other ways to meet those requirements.

Among the amendments, the committee limited the number of public charter schools authorized by the State Charter Commission to 10 in the first 10 years. In addition, no public charter school can open before July 1, 2012, and the amendment increases the oversight by the Department of Education of charter schools.

“We recognize that this is a difficult issue for many legislators,” said Judith D. Jones, chair of the Board of Directors for MACS. “But the hard work of the Education Committee has answered many of the concerns that have been raised. This is an important step forward in public education.”

Earlier this month, the Maine State Board of Education voted unanimously to support the legislation to create public charter schools in Maine.

On May 9, MACS released results of a recent poll showing that more than 65 percent of Mainers support allowing public charter schools in the state.

The poll, commissioned by MACS, asked respondents: “Charter schools are public schools that have the flexibility to be innovative, while being held accountable for improved student achievement. Would you support or oppose legislation allowing for the development of public charter schools in Maine? Is that strongly or somewhat?”

The poll was conducted between April 25 and May 2 by Pan Atlantic SMS in Portland.

For more information, go to: [www.mainecharterschools.org](http://www.mainecharterschools.org).