

Governor Creates Community Advisory Group to Support Wilmington Students

Group will provide important perspective on needs of City youth and the schools they attend

Wilmington, DE – Following through on a recommendation earlier this month from city legislators in the General Assembly, Governor Markell issued an Executive Order today to bring together community leaders, parents, teachers, and others active in Wilmington education to provide suggestions and feedback on ways to improve educational opportunities for city youth.

[E.O. 46](#) establishes the City of Wilmington Education Advisory Group, which will be comprised of at least 15 members appointed by the Governor in consultation with elected representatives from the city. The group, which is the result of a conversation the Governor had with Representative Charles Potter (D-Wilmington North), Representative Stephanie T. Bolden (D-Wilmington East), Representative James “J.J.” Johnson (D-New Castle), and Senator Margaret Rose Henry (D-Wilmington East), will offer input to the Governor and the Department of Education. Members are tasked with addressing educational outcomes, community involvement and family engagement in schools, social services and access to extracurricular activities.

“While we have seen improvements in college attendance and dropout rates, as well as increases in students who meet their individual growth goals throughout the state, we have not seen enough progress in schools serving our highest-need youth in Wilmington,” **said Governor Markell**. “We must not accept a status quo in which students in our most disadvantaged

communities fall further and further behind each year.

“Working with community leaders, activists, parents, teachers, and family members is essential to combating the inequalities that plague many City schools. I thank Senator Henry, Representative Potter, Representative Bolden, and Representative Johnson who suggested that I create this advisory group, and I look forward to working with this group to give Wilmington children the quality education that every Delaware child deserves.”

The perspective of the task force would complement increased funding available to help turn around the six lowest performing schools in the state, all located in the City of Wilmington. The Governor [recently announced an initiative](#) that would invest about \$6 million in additional funding in these “Priority Schools,” while ensuring the schools have outstanding leadership and increased flexibility to implement proven strategies to help disadvantaged students, and holding them accountable for making improvements. In addition, the Children’s Department has [won a \\$4 million federal grant](#) to support the social and emotional development of young children in some of these same communities.

“I have been approached by parents of students and other city residents who care deeply about the education our children receive and who can offer valuable insights to improve opportunities for our children,” **said Rep. Potter**. “I appreciate the Governor’s support of giving the community a stronger voice in their children’s education and thank him for working over the past few weeks to quickly establish this advisory group.”

“Too many of the children in our city communities are not getting the education they need,” **said Sen. Henry**. “We need to see more progress for our children, especially at our schools that struggle the most. And we will only make things better if we give the people who live in the communities the chance to

communicate their concerns and suggestions. I applaud the creation of this advisory group and look forward to the members of our community finally having an effective way to make themselves heard.”

The Governor announced that the group will be chaired by Dr. Tony Allen, founding President of the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League and a strong advocate for underprivileged children in Wilmington and a longtime Wilmington resident who has helped lead Bank of America’s community service efforts during his many years at the company. In 2012, Allen co-orchestrated the donation of a 450,000 square-foot Bank of America building to the Longwood Foundation to build a campus of schools designed to eliminate the achievement gap for 2,500 inner-city children.

“While I am humbled to accept the role, doing nothing is simply not an option,” said Allen. “Our City – and our state – cannot afford one more generation of underprepared young citizens without the skills to meet the challenges of the digital age and no incentive to succeed. The notion that these kids are un-teachable because of where they come from is wrong. It has already been proven that where ever public officials, school leaders and citizens have the will and the commitment to help those children succeed; they have, in fact, succeeded. We should set the standard. ”