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PRESS RELEASE

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS LAUNCHED

(SAN MATEO, CA) **September 24, 2012** – An ecumenical commission of leaders representing the majority of faiths that operate schools in the U.S. plans to collaborate and inject the importance of full parental choice in education into the national dialogue, the American Center for School Choice announced today. The Center’s newly-established **Commission on Faith-based Schools** met for the first time last Thursday in New York City.

“It is essential that the right and freedom of parents to choose the best education for their children be recognized and we believe this Commission will make an important contribution toward that goal,” stated Peter Hanley, executive director of the Center.

The Commission’s two immediate tasks will be to: 1) expand public understanding and appreciation of the role of faith-based schools in American education, especially in low-income communities; and, 2) address the need for expanding publicly funded school choice to increase a family’s ability to choose from among a full range of options, including a faith-based school.

Over the coming months the Commission will be documenting the characteristics and benefits these schools provide to families and to American education. It will be releasing a report and convening a national conference in spring 2013 to communicate its findings.

“Faith-based schools have served families well since America's earliest years. In recent years, many religious communities have opened new schools, and today faith-based schools are more diverse than ever. Unfortunately, many more have closed, especially in urban areas where they have been a powerful source of hope for many families. Faith based schools are precious assets, not only for the families they serve, but for the nation. Families have a right to choose faith based schools, and a wise nation should support their choice” commented Commission Chairman Michael Guerra, an American Center board member and former president of the National Catholic Educational Association.

“At Children’s Scholarship Fund, we believe parents are the first educators of their children and they should be empowered to choose the school that best fits their child’s needs, whether it is a faith-based school, an independent private school, a charter school, or a traditional government school,” said Darla Romfo, President of the Children’s Scholarship Fund and an American Center board associate. “The wide variety of faith-based schools in this country have been offering quality education alternatives to

generations of Americans for decades, and I hope the Commission on Faith-Based Schools will help them to continue their valuable work for decades to come.”

The American Center for School Choice is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit corporation that educates the public to increase support for families to choose the schools they believe will best serve their children. Additional information about the Center can be found at www.amcsc.org.

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COMMISSION ON FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS

Michael Guerra, Chairman, Past President, National Catholic Educational Association—During his tenure as president, Mr. Guerra presided over the presentation of an historical overview of U.S. Catholic education to Pope John Paul II and the foundation for a strategic plan to strengthen Catholic education. He has served on a wide variety of government and non-profit boards, including the National Assessment Governing Board, the Council for American Private Education, the Foundation for Teaching Economics, and the Office International de L’Enseignement Catholique. He is a founding director of the American Center for School Choice.

Dr. Vernard Gant, Vice Chairman, Director of Urban School Services, Association of Christian Schools International—In this position, Dr. Gant is responsible for overseeing over 300 Christian schools throughout the nation that target and serve minority, under-resourced, and urban children. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the board for The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO).

Robert Aguirre, President/CEO, Catholic Association of Latino Leaders—Mr. Aguirre has been a long time education activist for parental choice to better serve the needs of low-income families. In 1998 Aguirre founded the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (CREO) based in Washington, DC with a mission to organize Hispanic communities for the cause of fighting for access to equal educational opportunities and to advance education public policy at the state level. He is a director for the American Center for School Choice.

Robert Birdsell, President and CEO, Cristo Rey Network—Mr. Birdsell has led the organization through a strategic phase that strengthened the leadership of the schools and now is growing the number of schools, for which he has already received grant support. Prior to joining the Cristo Rey Network, Rob was a Managing Vice President with Eduventures, an industry leader in educational research and consulting.

Robert Futrell, Board Member, McKay Scholarship Schools—As a board member of the Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools, Mr. Futrell creates an awareness of children with special education needs within faith based schools. He is an administrator at Trinity Christian Academy in Jacksonville, Florida where over a hundred students are McKay Scholarship recipients (ESE students) and over 250 students are Step Up for Student Scholarship recipients from low income families.

Charles Glenn, Professor, Educational Leadership and Development, Boston University—Professor Glenn is a widely published and recognized expert, active in educational policy debates in the United

States and Europe, is vice president of OIDEL (the Geneva-based NGO promoting educational freedom worldwide), and a member of the boards of the European Association for Education Law and Policy and the Council for American Private Education, and of five scholarly journals.

COMMISSION ON FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS continued

Sydney Hay, Executive Director, Arizona CAPE and Southwest Policy Group—Ms. Hay has been a critical and integral part of moving school choice forward in Arizona. She is currently organizing the Arizona branch of the Council on American Private Education and continues to be active in expanding and implementing school choice in the state.

Kathy Jamil, Director, Islamic Schools League of America—Ms. Jamil is a founding member of Universal School in Buffalo, NY and the Chair of ISLA, a national non-profit that works to promote education for Islamic Schools.

Michael McConnell, Professor, Stanford Law School and Director, Constitutional Law Center, Stanford University—Professor McConnell stepped down from the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit to join the faculty at Stanford University in 2009. He has written broadly on many aspects of the Constitution, but is best known for his work on freedom of speech and religion.

Dale McDonald, PBVM, PhD, Director, Public Policy and Educational Research, National Catholic Educational Association—Sister McDonald serves NCEA and its members in policy analysis and advocacy roles regarding the national education policy issues impacting Catholic schools. Prior to joining NCEA, Sr. McDonald was director of the Catholic School Leadership Program in the Boston College Graduate School of Education

Darla Romfo, President, Children's Scholarship Fund—Ms. Romfo leads the nation's largest private scholarship program dedicated to providing partial scholarships for low-income children in grades K-8 to go to private school. CSF has provided scholarships to more than 123,000 children since its inception in 1998 and currently serves almost 25,500 children nationwide.

Dr. A. H. Senske, Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod—Dr. Senske is a former Director of Schools for the Lutheran Church and served as an Assistant Secretary of Education for Non-public Schools in the U.S. Department of Education. He is currently on the Board of Directors of Christian Friends of New Americans assisting with educational choice for refugee families.

John Witte, Jr., Director, Center for the Study of Law and Religion, Emory University—As a specialist in legal history, marriage law, and religious liberty, Professor Witte has published 200 articles, 15 journal symposia, and 25 books.

David Zwiebel, Executive Vice President, Agudath Israel of America—By profession, Rabbi Zwiebel is an attorney, whose areas of professional experience include religious freedom, church-state relations, civil rights, private education and medical ethics. Rabbi Zwiebel is a member of the national board of the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), chairs the Committee of New York City Religious

and Independent School Officials, and is a member and former chairman of the New York State Commissioner of Education's Advisory Council for Nonpublic Schools.