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For Immediate Release

## **CCG announces tax credits for Chester Charter School for the Arts**

*New school will let students move from warehouse and add grades 11 and 12*

**HARRISBURG** – Commonwealth Cornerstone Group (CCG) today announced it has completed a \$7.5 million New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) financing transaction that will help fund the construction of a new building for the non-profit Chester Charter School for the Arts (CCSA).

The school currently operates out of a warehouse building that was modified to accommodate the needs of students in grades kindergarten through grade 10. However, the warehouse structure is limiting the school's ability to serve its students, and it currently doesn't have room to include grades 11 and 12. Having outgrown the space, CCSA decided not to renew its lease.

Funding will help the school to construct a 90,500-square-foot K-12 school building that will be better suited for supporting the educational requirements of the students.

"For many children, a good education is the key for them to escape a cycle of poverty," said Brian A. Hudson Sr., CCG chairman and executive director of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). "This tax credit funding for Chester Charter School for the Arts will help grow an educational resource that will have a positive ripple effect in the city of Chester and the surrounding area."

CCG was created in 2004 by PHFA to serve as a nonprofit community development entity.

The new three-story building will include two classrooms for each grade, breakout reading rooms on each floor, a multimedia computer lab, science labs, dance and art studios, a cafeteria and a gymnasium. The site for the new school is 1200 Highland Avenue in Chester. The total project cost is \$26.6 million.

Current enrollment for the school is 550 students. By adding the two additional grades, the school expects to grow its student body by another 100 students. Of these 650 students, 76 percent will be from low-income families.

Since opening its doors in 2012, CCSA has demonstrated its ability to boost student performance, boasting:

- The third highest year-to-year improvement among 800 public schools
- 47 percent of students score proficient or advanced in reading
- 56 percent of students score proficient or advanced in math
- 80 percent of first graders are on or above grade level in literacy
- An attendance rate of 95 percent

This project is expected to generate at least 50 construction jobs paying approximately \$21/hour. The project's construction activities will likely create 34 indirect and induced jobs. Additionally, it's estimated that 10 new permanent, full-time jobs will be created at the school and 70 existing positions will be retained. It's anticipated that the 10 new jobs will come with benefits.

### About CCSA

CCSA offers a rigorous academic education following an arts integrated model. This approach applies a combination of artistic discipline with traditional classroom subjects to broaden and encourage learning. Research has shown that children with extensive arts experience outperform their peers in attendance

*(more)*

and earn higher test scores. CCSA is the only school in the Chester Upland School District designated as “proficient” by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

About Commonwealth Cornerstone Group

The goal of CCG, through its administration of New Markets Tax Credits, is to fund projects in key areas of communities that have historic or cultural value and offer opportunities to spark economic revitalization. CCG utilizes NMTCs to provide loans and equity investments for business expansion, mixed-use development, and community facilities across Pennsylvania. Examples of past developments that have benefited from CCG’s investment of tax credits include Bakery Square in Pittsburgh, the Coal Street Community Facility in Wilkes-Barre, and Schmucker Hall in Gettysburg. Learn more at: [www.commonwealthcornerstone.org/](http://www.commonwealthcornerstone.org/).

About the New Markets Tax Credit Program

The New Markets Tax Credit Program was established by Congress in 2000 to spur new or increased investments in operating businesses and real estate projects located in low-income communities. The NMTC Program attracts investment capital to low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their federal income tax return in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial institutions called community development entities, such as Commonwealth Cornerstone Group. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

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