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GOVERNOR SEEKS COURT APPROVAL FOR ABBOTT DISTRICT FUNDING IN UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR

Application to the New Jersey Supreme Court asks approval of \$4.2 billion in aid to Abbott districts; pledges accountability and standards

Trenton – Acting on behalf of the New Jersey Department of Education, Attorney General Zulima V. Farber today filed an application before the New Jersey Supreme Court seeking the court’s approval of Governor Jon S. Corzine’s recommended school aid budget for Fiscal Year 2007. The Governor’s budget would distribute \$4.253 billion to the Abbott school districts, including \$500 million in supplemental funding and \$243 million in pre-school expansion aid. The \$243 million in pre-school aide represents a \$39 million increase from last year’s funding level.

The application before the court makes note of Governor Corzine’s efforts to bring the state’s budget into balance without one-shot fiscal gimmicks and his decision to hold state aid to all school districts relatively level compared to the current fiscal year. “In light of the dire fiscal circumstances of the state and the high per pupil spending already in existence in the Abbott districts, the Governor could not permit another year of open-ended increases for Abbott districts, ” the Attorney General writes in her brief.

“Accountability is the touchstone, but accountability can only be achieved by the application of discernable and recognizable outcome measures,” the application states.

“The state has a responsibility to subject school districts to the same level of management oversight and fiscal discipline as the Governor has applied to the Executive Department,” the application continues. “New Jersey can no longer afford the open-ended process of annual supplemental requests that have led to the extraordinary growth in Abbott district spending, especially when we lack proof that the supplemental programs are working.”

In making its application, the administration commits to a new approach to school funding, based on the needs of all children with similar disadvantages, rather than residencies. The administration pledged to establish management and oversight to assure the efficient use of state funds.

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A COPY OF THE BRIEF IS LOCATED AT www.nj.gov/oag/40706abbottbrief