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Council of the Great City Schools
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**Statement by Michael Casserly, Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools
On
*“Waiting for Superman”***

WASHINGTON -- The nation’s major urban public school systems are pleased that the public’s attention continues to be drawn to the challenges and needs of America’s education system. *“Waiting for Superman,”* a new movie released by Paramount Pictures, tells the story of families struggling to ensure that their children receive the highest quality schooling, a goal that the nation’s big-city school leaders understand and are working to achieve every day.

While controversial, the new film is an important reminder of what is important to parents. It should trigger continued debate about how we can improve the quality of teaching and student supports in our schools, so every family is confident in the education we provide, the choices they have, and their prospects for the future.

America’s Great City Schools are blessed with the country’s most talented supermen and superwomen—leaders like Michelle Rhee, who is featured in the movie—but also so many other superintendents, chief executive officers, and chancellors, who are working with their talented teachers every day to reform and save our schools, their children, and the nation’s future.

The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation’s primary coalition of large urban school systems, thinks the nation would be encouraged by the progress that these superheroes, their mayors, school boards, staff and teachers have been making to boost student achievement. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress—the Nation’s Report Card—show that not only have the country’s large central city schools made significant gains in reading and math at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels over the last seven years, but that they have been improving substantially faster than the nation in both subjects and grades. In other words, our urban public schools are catching up with the country and are giving our competition a run for its money.

Substantial work still needs to be done to enhance student achievement, turn around our chronically low-performing schools, overhaul our collective bargaining agreements, strengthen our teacher and staff evaluation systems, and give all our urban children full access to the American dream. But, our Great City Schools are now the home of the country’s most innovative and promising reforms. We have aggressively supported the new Common Core State Standards well ahead of most states; embraced accountability;

volunteered for the nation's toughest assessment; strengthened our curriculum and professional development; experimented with performance pay, small schools, and choice; built a unique performance-management system that would be the envy of any private-sector corporation; and provided each other with hard-nosed technical assistance to improve student achievement and operational efficiency.

Our collective efforts are producing better schools, higher student academic attainment, and stronger overall management and operations—and we are just getting started.

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