



MEDIA RELEASE

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Senator Greg Hembree named 2023 Kids First Charter Champion

The award is a joint recognition from the Charter Institute at Erskine and South Carolina Public Charter School District

COLUMBIA, SC – Senator Greg Hembree of District 28, Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, was named the 2023 “Hall of Fame” Charter Champion in front of almost 500 charter school stakeholders at the Kids First Conference on Tuesday, September 26. Watch the video [here](#).

The Charter Institute at Erskine and the South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD) present the Charter Champion Award to one individual every year at the Kids First Conference. Past winners include Governor Henry McMaster (2021) and South Carolina Speaker of the House, Murrell Smith (2022). The purpose of this award is to celebrate and honor leaders who are committed to putting the welfare of all children at the forefront of educational policy and reform.

“Charter schools in South Carolina and the rest of the country are the laboratories where we are going to learn the best way to teach our students as we go forward because it has changed, and it’s going to continue to change,” said Senator Hembree in his address to the audience at the Kids First Conference.

Senator Hembree is a passionate advocate for school choice and high-quality charter schools. He has continuously emphasized the importance of parental choice in shaping each child’s individual educational journey. One of his most pivotal contributions was the role that he played in developing the new educational funding formula.

In addition to permanent funding, Senator Hembree has prioritized accountability for all schools, streamlining paperwork for teachers, schools, and school districts, and focusing on what is most important – the students.

“Senator Greg Hembree's unwavering dedication to the advancement of educational choice, high-quality charter schools, and educational freedom has made a profound impact on the lives of countless South Carolina families,” said SCPCSD Superintendent Chris Neeley. “His visionary leadership has paved the way for a brighter and more inclusive future for our students.”

The Kids First Conference is an annual event that is hosted by the Charter Institute at Erskine and South Carolina Public Charter School District. This year, the guest list was comprised of the school leaders, Board members, teachers, and school staff of 60 South Carolina charter schools. It aims to unify charter school leaders and strengthen them under one mission -- to put Kids First.

“Leaders like Senator Hembree and the ones that attend the Kids First Conference are making an impact on education in South Carolina,” said Charter at Institute at Erskine Superintendent Cameron Runyan. “This is what the Kids First Conference is all about - bringing together those who are making an impact on the charter sector and celebrating their accomplishments, while inspiring them to continue to innovate and Move the Needle for students.”

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The Charter Institute at Erskine is the fastest-growing school district in South Carolina. Serving 28 schools and 26,000 students across the state, the Charter Institute at Erskine is committed to innovative, creative, high-quality methods of education. For more information about the Institute, please visit www.erskinecharters.org.

The South Carolina Public Charter School District authorizes, champions, and supports the creation and advancement of innovative K-12 public charter schools in South Carolina. We value all students' unique talents and abilities and hold high expectations for social, emotional, and academic growth inclusively within the diverse population we serve. <https://sccharter.org/>



Senator Greg Hembree with Superintendents Cameron Runyan and Chris Neeley.



Senator Hembree addresses hundreds of charter school leaders at the Kids First Conference.