WHEREAS, parents, teachers, and leaders from business, faith-based and other community organizations in New Jersey all have an important role in ensuring that our children receive a quality education in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning; and

WHEREAS, developing good character in our young people is essential to providing a safe and productive school environment; and

WHEREAS, the events of September 11th have heightened the sensitivity of our nation and our state, causing citizens to give greater consideration to common beliefs, character virtues, and service to others; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has a compelling interest to provide leadership for a statewide effort on character education so that students throughout the State can be involved in programs that recognize our common values and help them to become good citizens; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has a compelling interest to help schools create classroom environments that promote effective learning and encourage students to respect one another; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has a compelling interest to help schools teach students the importance of good character traits such as integrity, fairness, respect, and citizenship; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has a compelling interest to teach students how to solve conflicts without resorting to intimidation or violence, and to avoid the dangers of drugs and alcohol; and

WHEREAS, nationwide research demonstrates that successful character education programs are based on values determined by the local community and transmitted through incorporation into existing curriculum; and

WHEREAS, research demonstrates that the provision of meaningful character education programs that incorporate common values, conflict resolution, and service to others can best be achieved by involving parents and commun in such efforts along with the school community; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has a compelling interest to gather information on best practices and principles that define good character education programs; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey desires to build upon existing programs and efforts currently being undertaken by schools in this state.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JAMES E. MC GREEVEY, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:
1. There is hereby established The New Jersey Character Education Commission.

2. The Commission shall be co-chaired by Father Edwin Leahy, Headmaster of St. Benedict’s Preparatory School; Dr. Moses William Howard, Pastor of Bethany Baptist Church; Maud Dahme, President of the New Jersey State Board of Education; and Clarence Hoover, Superintendent of the Vineland Public Schools. Other members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Governor, with representation from faith-based organizations, community and service organizations, parents, and education leaders throughout the State.

3. The Commission shall begin meeting in March 2002 and shall report to the Governor on or before September 30, 2002.

4. The Commission shall review best practices for character education and shall set forth options for communities and school districts to undertake the development of community-based character education programs.

5. In its recommendations, the Commission shall consider programs that:

   a. Teach students the importance of character traits such as integrity, fairness, respect, responsibility, and citizenship
   
   b. Incorporate character education through the existing curriculum
   
   c. Create schools that are safe
   
   d. Create classroom environments that promote effective learning and encourage students to respect one another
   
   e. Teach students how to solve conflicts fairly and respectfully without resorting to intimidation or violence
   
   f. Develop leadership skills and offer students opportunities to serve others
   
   g. Engage parents and the entire community in cooperative efforts to build and model good character.

6. The Commission shall be staffed by personnel from the Department of Education.
7. The Commission is authorized to call upon any department, office, or agency of State government to provide such information, resources or other assistance deemed necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this Order. Each department, officer, division and agency of this State is required to cooperate with the Commission and to furnish it with such information and assistance as is necessary to accomplish the purpose of this Order.

8. The meetings of this Commission shall be publicly advertised throughout the State of New Jersey and shall open to the public so as to allow for input from the community.

9. This Order shall take effect immediately.

    GIVEN, under my hand and seal this 27th day of February in the Year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Two, and the Independence of the United States, the Two Hundred and Twenty-Sixth.

/s/ JAMES E. McGREEVEY
Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ PAUL A. LEVINSOHN

Chief Counsel to the Governor