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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW BEDFORD EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE ANNOUNCES NEW CO-CHAIRS *Reaffirms Efforts to Improve Public Education in New Bedford*

The New Bedford Education Roundtable is pleased to announce that long-time **members Kate Fentress and Dr. Bruce Rose are its new co-chairs**, replacing outgoing Chair John K. Bullard.

Kate is the Executive Director of the Women's Fund of Southeastern Mass., whose mission is to advance the educational attainment and economic security of women and girls in the region. Bruce is Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UMass Dartmouth and Vice President of the NAACP, New Bedford Chapter.

"John Bullard has been a terrific role model and leader since we began meeting in the spring of 2010," Ms. Fentress said. "We have reached out to many constituencies to build our case and understand the challenges the New Bedford Public Schools face. I look forward to working with Bruce and other Roundtable members to advocate for changes that will address root causes and establish best practices for the successful education of every child."

"Concern and support for education should be an obligation of all citizens of a community," Dr. Rose said. "The New Bedford Education Roundtable is established pursuant to that obligation. It is our hope that we may help to energize support and concern within all elements of the community for the high quality education of our students."

The Roundtable is a forum of individuals and organizational representatives who seek transformative change in the New Bedford Public Schools. Hosted by the Community Foundation, its members include representatives of 15 business, religious, philanthropic, educational and other community-based organizations. John Bullard has served as Chair since the Roundtable's inception in 2010, and will remain a member.

In the past two years, the Roundtable has actively pursued many of the goals built into its vision of a community where children are well educated and prepared for whatever post-secondary training or education is necessary for them to become economically self-sufficient and productive members of our community. The significant activities of the Roundtable to date include:

1. Providing data on MCAS scores in New Bedford and comparing the data with results from other Gateway Cities via a report from the UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative commissioned by the Roundtable. We will continue to support The Urban Initiatives' ongoing efforts to monitor the progress of public education in New Bedford.
2. Three opinion pieces in the Standard-Times in 2011, intended to increase the number of community stakeholders who are engaged in the education conversation.
3. Hosted forums and debates focusing on the public schools and how elected officials will approach the many challenges facing them. The Roundtable also met individually with the mayoral candidates.

4. The Roundtable has collaborated with community stakeholders, including regular meetings with the Superintendent of Schools, a meeting with the leadership of the New Bedford Educators Association, and meetings with Elementary, Middle and High School Principals.

More specifically, the Roundtable supports efforts to improve teacher effectiveness, including greater parental involvement, and will continue to develop and support ways to increase attendance, decrease out-of-school suspensions and improve the high school graduation rate. The Roundtable also supports United Interfaith Action's Small Autonomous Schools Initiative.

Links to the MCAS report and the opinion pieces, as well as more background about the Roundtable and its membership, can be found at <http://www.cfsema.org/about-us/what-we-do/new-bedford-education-roundtable>

About the Chairs

As the Fund's first Executive Director, **Kate Fentress** has had a hand in every aspect of the development of the organization she now manages. With an MSW from Boston University, Ms. Fentress applies her clinical background as well as her many years of fundraising experience both professionally and as a volunteer. Before coming to the Women's Fund, she was the Development Director at the Inter-Church Council of Greater New Bedford and also at the Lloyd Center for the Environment in Dartmouth. She commands a deep understanding of the challenges and the opportunities the 21st Century offers all women. Ms. Fentress was selected by the Standard-Times in January 2008 as Southcoast Woman of The Year.

Dr. Bruce Rose has been dedicated to improving access and opportunity in education throughout his higher education career of more than 30 years. At UMass Dartmouth, he has had responsibility for overseeing various academic support initiatives and opportunity programs, including the Upward Bound Program. Dr. Rose is active in the New Bedford community as Vice President of the NAACP and Chair of the Education Committee; he is a SMILES Literacy Mentor; and was a founding member of the Advocacy Committee for Excellence in Education (ACEE). He also served on the District-Wide Committee for School Improvement, which led to the transformation of the district's junior high school system to a middle school system.