



For Immediate Release

## NEXT for AUTISM Names Dr. Timothy Purnell as Chief Executive Officer

NEXT for AUTISM is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Timothy Purnell as its first Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Purnell, a leader in nonprofit organizations, will provide strategic vision and innovative leadership during the organization's next phase of growth. His appointment is the culmination of a two-year strategic planning process conducted by the organization. He will report directly to the Board of Directors. Ilene Lainer will remain as President & Co-Founder, continuing to serve the organization as senior advisor to the CEO and the board, providing guidance on overall strategic and programmatic direction and ensuring the highest level of quality in the NEXT for AUTISM programs.

### PIONEERING BUILDERS OF AUTISM PROGRAMS

Co-founded by Laura Slatkin and Ilene Lainer, NEXT for AUTISM has built pioneering, model programs for individuals with autism and their families since 2003. It has designed and launched 8 innovative programs at the extraordinary pace of 1 program approximately every two years for the past 17 years. Partnering with respected institutions, NEXT for AUTISM has created: **the NYC Autism Charter Schools in Harlem and the Bronx**, the first autism charter schools in New York City dedicated to evidence-based teaching; **the Center for Autism and the Developing Brain**, a state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment center in partnership with NY-Presbyterian Hospital and the medical schools at Cornell & Columbia Universities; **a teacher-training program at Hunter College**; **after school programs** at the Jewish community centers in Manhattan and Long Island; and future-focused programs for adults with autism - an **employment training and internship program** done in partnership with Project SEARCH at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center; **NEXT for NEIGHBORS**, run by Arc Westchester, which offers community living with individualized, supportive services; and **Corporate Employment Consulting** to support businesses to hire and retain employees with autism.

### NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH

NEXT for AUTISM enters its next chapter continuing to challenge assumptions and accelerate change on behalf of individuals and families living with autism. In this new landscape of pandemics and of national upheaval, the organization remains committed to its mission of meeting service gaps with innovation, strategically collaborating with partners and changemakers and sharing its models to achieve systemic change.

After conducting an extensive search, the Executive Committee of the board recommended **Dr. Timothy Purnell** to the post. An entrepreneurial leader and strategic planner, Dr. Purnell has a proven track record of spearheading transformational initiatives and building businesses for global expansion. As superintendent of the Somerville public school district in New Jersey, he oversaw a \$44 million budget, educational services, personnel management, and stakeholder communications for district schools. He implemented the first district-wide, trauma-sensitive initiatives in New Jersey and launched multiple-disabilities classes, learning differences, and life skills programs. This work led to a Spirit of Inclusion Award in 2014. Dr. Purnell is deeply committed to equal access in the educational space. He was one of 100 educators invited to President Obama's 2014 ConnectED Initiative. In 2016, Dr. Purnell was named National Superintendent of the Year and was recognized as a Highest Rated Professor in the Nation for his class on mental health. As an executive, Dr. Purnell utilizes multiple-lens diagnostics, forecasting, fiscal accountability, employee satisfaction, leadership development, and goal-oriented productivity to achieve rational growth and expansion. He led a 27% increase in revenue over three years and expansion of operations to Asia as the CEO of the American Montessori Society. Dr. Purnell holds a doctorate in leadership from Seton Hall University, where he was named a 2019 Many Are One award recipient for service leadership. He is an internationally recognized speaker on topics such as leadership, ethics, trauma and mental health.

"At NEXT for AUTISM, we're deeply committed to ideating and building cutting-edge programs in partnership with highly-respected institutions nationwide so that individuals and families living with autism may have brighter futures," stated **Laura Slatkin, Co-Founder & Board President of NEXT for AUTISM**. "We're confident that Dr. Purnell, working collaboratively with the current executive team, has the right leadership skills, management style, and depth of experience to lead NEXT for AUTISM into the future as we continue to transform the autism landscape in this new climate."

"I am so proud of the work we've accomplished. In the last two years alone, we've doubled our staff, opened the pilot of our community living program, and launched a new consulting unit to work with corporations to hire and retain employees with autism," said **Ilene Lainer, President & Co-Founder**, "I look forward to continuing alongside the board and Dr. Purnell to build NEXT for AUTISM's future. The prevalence of autism just increased to 1 in 54 from 1 in 59, according to the Centers for Disease Control, and an estimated half-million young people will become adults in the next decade. It will take commitment, passion, creativity and determination to imagine the future for individuals with autism and for our organization in this new world."

"NEXT for AUTISM has blazed a formidable path innovating model services for people with autism and their families," said Dr. Purnell. "Its entrepreneurial mindset resonates with my belief that innovation and flexible, realistic thinking are the keys to success. In our changing national landscape, it will be critical to build institutional resilience and shift leadership thinking towards even more creative approaches to program building and organizational management. I am humbled by what the organization has accomplished, and look forward to leading it into the future as we confront stubborn historical challenges in access to care and social justice."