



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AZ Schools Now Statement on FY18 Budget: Lawmakers Failed to Address Most Pressing Needs of Arizona Schools

Phoenix, Ariz.—With the passage of another budget chock full of special interest giveaways, tax cuts and expanded tax credits, Governor Doug Ducey and the Arizona Legislature continued down a dangerous path, ignoring the most pressing needs of Arizona’s public schools and our 1.1 million students.

“AZ Schools Now was hopeful that Governor Ducey intended to keep his promise to parents, teachers and education advocates that Proposition 123 was the first step toward making our schools whole,” said Paula Purkhiser, president of the Arizona PTA. “After more than a billion dollars in cuts, we believed the governor when he said he would work to solve the teacher shortage crisis and close the achievement gap. But this year’s budget, coupled with the dangerous expansion of ESA vouchers, proved that neither of those statements was true.”

Dana Wolfe Naimark, president and CEO of Children’s Action Alliance, stated, “Children’s advocates are saddened that, once again, Arizona’s state lawmakers have chosen to maintain the status quo instead of taking bold steps to improve the lives of our most precious assets. Prioritizing a tax cut that gives the average Arizona family \$4 per year instead of directing significant dollars toward pay raises for our last-in-the-nation teacher salaries indicates a huge disconnect between lawmakers and the needs of our residents.”

“The Legislature had an opportunity to pass a bipartisan budget that would have been a win for Arizona teachers and students as well as provide much-needed resources for our state universities,” said Joe Thomas, president of the Arizona Education Association. “Instead, they crafted a highly partisan budget behind closed doors that traded votes for pet projects and special interest giveaways.”

The largest chunk of new K-12 education dollars was directed to a select group

of schools that are already excelling, with the majority of those schools in high-income neighborhoods in Pima and Maricopa counties. “Education advocates were united in their opposition to the Governor’s ‘results-based’ funding proposal, which picked funding winners and losers and largely left out public schools in rural Arizona,” stated Julie Bacon, president of the Arizona School Boards Association.

“Superintendents, school board members, and teacher groups lobbied lawmakers for action on the teacher shortage, not another policy that emphasized inequitable funding,” explained Bacon. “In addition, the one-percent ‘raise’ that was approved by the Legislature was not allocated into protected, base-level funding, meaning it is neither permanent funding nor subject to inflation increases.”

Jennifer Johnson, executive director of Support Our Schools AZ, stated, “Hundreds of parents emailed, called and rallied our elected officials, imploring them to offer meaningful teacher raises. What we saw in return was a legislature that shifted a tremendous amount of public resources into private hands and took deliberate steps to dismantle our public schools.”

Despite the obvious failings of the recently passed budget, AZ Schools Now remains focused on ways to reinvest in Arizona’s public schools and will continue to champion policies that promote academic success for our students.

AZ Schools Now member organizations:

Arizona Association of School Psychologists

Arizona Business and Education Coalition

Arizona Center for Economic Progress

Arizona Education Association

Arizona Education Network

Arizona Interfaith Network

Arizona PTA

Arizona School Administrators Association

Children’s Action Alliance

Christine Marsh, Arizona Educational Foundation 2016 Teacher of the Year

Friends of ASBA

League of Women Voters of Arizona

Stronger Together, AZ

Support Our Schools Arizona

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