



January 23, 2017

Governor Doug Ducey
Office of Governor Doug Ducey
State Capitol
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Ducey,

AZ Schools Now appreciates your commitment to follow through on your promise to increase state investments for Arizona's public schools. We are encouraged by your focus on addressing teacher shortages and in helping low-income students. We ask, however, that you consider our recommendation to prioritize all new K-12 investments on teacher salaries and that you begin convening stakeholder meetings to discuss long-term funding solutions that include an update of Prop. 301.

This coalition, which collectively, represents some of Arizona's most ardent and invested supporters of public education, shares your desire to close the achievement gap and move us closer to the goals outlined in the Arizona Progress Meter. But those goals cannot be attained when so many students are lacking the most important tool for success: a qualified classroom teacher.

A recent report by the Arizona School Personnel Administrators Association showed our teacher shortage crisis is not improving but rather worsening. Unfortunately, a teacher raise of two percent phased in over five years will not improve the teacher shortage in any meaningful way. Therefore, AZ Schools Now is asking you to reconsider spreading scarce resources among numerous initiatives and instead focus all new funding on permanent teacher raises.

We propose increasing the raises from 0.4 to 4 percent for FY2018. This can be accomplished by combining the \$95 million you have already identified in new funding with three additional revenue sources that include funding from the achievement district, a freeze on the growth in "low-income" corporate private school tax credits, and a pause in additional tax cuts.

The achievement district was announced two years ago with \$24 million in funding set aside to ensure every child in Arizona has access to a quality public school. With so

many teaching positions unfilled, this promise cannot be upheld without first attending to our teacher shortage crisis. Implementing an immediate freeze on corporate private school tax credits will add an additional \$12 million to the general fund this coming year and more over time, and skipping this year's tax cut will free up \$3 million more for much needed teacher raises.

While we believe moving all available new funding into teacher raises is the most prudent way to address the teacher shortage crisis today, we recognize we simply cannot solve this issue under current budget constraints. Too many issues of critical importance to Arizona's future, including targeted funding for students in high poverty areas, cannot be attended to without addressing our revenue structure. Therefore, we ask you to begin convening stakeholder meetings to discuss long-term funding solutions that include an update of Prop. 301. Arizona schools need this funding certainty to plan accordingly.

Just as we worked together to ensure the passage of Proposition 123, AZ Schools Now is prepared to work with you and your office to engage parents, educators and taxpayers on long-term solutions for the benefit of our students and our state.

Sincerely,



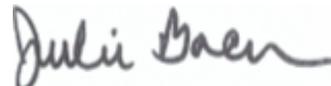
Dick Foreman
President and CEO
Arizona Business & Education Coalition



Joseph H. Thomas
President
Arizona Education Association



Mark Joraanstad
Executive Director
Arizona School Administrators Association



Julie Bacon
President
Arizona School Boards Association



Paula Purkhiser
President
Arizona PTA



Christine Marsh
2016 Arizona Teacher of the Year



Dana Naimark
President and CEO
Children's Action Alliance



Rev. Martha Seaman
President
Arizona Interfaith Network



Dr. Jennifer Johnson
Executive Director
Support Our Schools AZ



Jen Darland
Vice President
Arizona Education Network

cc:
Kirk Adams
Dawn Wallace
Lorenzo Romero