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AZ Schools Now Statement on the Governor's Proposed Budget *The time to address long-term revenue sources and the teacher shortage crisis is now*

Phoenix, Ariz.—AZ Schools Now is pleased that Governor Ducey is joining business CEO's, parents and education advocates in making a commitment to increase state investments for Arizona's public school students. We agree with the Governor's focus on addressing the teacher shortage crisis and in helping low-income students.

However, \$95 million in additional funding for FY2018 does not begin to cover the substantial cuts made in the last decade to K-12 funding. With so few dollars spread over 15 separate initiatives, the proposal lacks the funds needed to move the needle on key benchmarks that fuel student success. Given these constraints, AZ Schools Now is asking the Governor and legislators to focus all new K-12 investment on teacher salaries to address our most pressing issue: teacher shortages.

"Tinkering around the edges will not solve Arizona's teacher shortage," noted Joe Thomas, president of the Arizona Education Association. "Arizona ranks near the bottom in teacher pay. Raising salaries by 0.4 percent does not meaningfully address this crisis or help the thousands of students left without a qualified teacher in the classroom."

AZ Schools Now recommends an investment of \$134 million to be used for permanent teacher salary increases. The monies include the \$95 million identified by the Governor in new funding initiatives for K-12 as well as \$24 million that was set aside two years ago for achievement districts. Implementing a freeze on corporate private school tax credits will add an additional \$12 million, and skipping this year's tax cut will free up \$3 million more.

Dr. Timothy Ogle, executive director of the Arizona School Boards Association, stated, "It is impossible to solve our current teacher shortage within the existing revenue

structure, but raising teacher salaries by 4 percent instead of 0.4 percent makes a strong statement to educators that lawmakers are willing to move in the right direction.”

“Arizonans are ready to turn the page on short-term funding proposals that result in one crisis after another,” said Jen Darland, regional leader of Arizona Parent Network and Support Our Schools AZ. “We are calling on the Governor and legislature to convene stakeholder meetings this session to discuss long-term funding solutions that include new revenue sources and an update of Prop. 301.”

AZ Schools Now is a coalition of dedicated volunteers, teachers, parents, school board members, education leaders and advocates that came together prior to the passage of Prop. 123 to focus on the next steps to reinvest in Arizona’s public schools.

Collectively, the constituencies of the AZ Schools Now partner organizations represent some of Arizona’s most ardent and invested supporters of public education. These organizations include the Arizona Business and Education Coalition, Arizona Education Association, Arizona Education Network, Arizona School Boards Association, Arizona PTA, Arizona School Administrators Association, Children’s Action Alliance, Arizona Center for Economic Progress, Support Our Schools Arizona, and Valley Interfaith Project.

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