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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST NC URGES RECONSIDERATION OF BRUTAL CUTS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

Proposed budget fails students and families while undermining North Carolina's economic foundation

Raleigh, NC—July 22, 2013—Public Schools First NC is disappointed by the General Assembly's aggressive attack against public education in its proposed biennial budget. By syphoning public dollars away for private school vouchers, slashing funds for teaching assistants, eliminating teacher professionalism and increasing class size, the budget strikes at the heart of proven strategies that lead to strong schools; adequate funding, small class sizes, and experienced educators.

“This assault on North Carolina's long-standing tradition of excellence in public education is no way to make history or lead our state forward,” said Yevonne Brannon, Chair, Public Schools First NC. “The de-funding of public education and privatization of our public schools is in violation of our state constitution and a direct attack on our state's economic viability. We will lose high quality teachers and fail to attract new business as a result of these harsh policies.”

The proposed school voucher program was never debated in the Senate, and if launched, will grow exponentially. Private and religious schools that accept taxpayer-funded vouchers will not be held to the same standards of accountability as public schools, nor will they have to admit all applicants—creating an unequal playing field for students and uncertainty for taxpayers. Across the nation, school voucher experiments have failed to improve academic success. This is a veiled attempt to create two separate and unequal school systems with tax dollars.

The Senate's teacher tenure plan never had a floor debate in either chamber, nor was it vetted in a House committee. Eliminating teacher tenure and drastically cutting teaching assistants effectively **dismantles the teaching profession** in North Carolina. Our state's already low teacher salaries (48th in national rankings), would now be coupled with a lack of job security, no pay for graduate degrees, severe cuts to teacher assistants, larger class sizes and no meaningful salary increases in the biennium. This creates a climate that

discourages new teaching talent and encourages current teachers to leave the profession or the state of North Carolina.

The proposed budget erodes the foundation of support for the nearly 1.5 million children served by our public schools. Public Schools First NC is proud of North Carolina's long-standing tradition of excellence in public education and the legacy that has created a foundation for economic growth for all NC citizens.

Attempts to privatize public education threaten economic prosperity and equity for all students. Major new policy initiatives deserve open public debate and should not be negotiated behind closed doors. This proposed budget unnecessarily cuts support for a generation of children who will suffer unless the General Assembly rejects this failing budget. North Carolina needs strong schools to attract employers and create jobs. Public Schools First NC implores the General Assembly to reject this proposed budget and work to keep North Carolina's public schools first in our nation, not last. The proposed budget will condemn North Carolina to a new and undesirable standing in the landscape of public education.

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About Public Schools First NC:

Public Schools First NC (PSFNC) is a group of citizens, parents, teachers, businesses and organizations joining together to advocate for a first-rate public education system for all North Carolinians. To learn more or to join our organization, please visit: publicschoolsfirstnc.org and on FaceBook. Follow us on Twitter: @PS1NC.