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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST NC DISAPPOINTED IN LACK OF SUPPORT FOR
EXPERIENCED TEACHERS; 129% INCREASE
IN SCHOOL VOUCHER FUNDING**

**Despite Restoring Some Previous Cuts, Budget Does not Advance Our Public Schools;
Funding Still Below Pre-Recession Levels**

Raleigh, NC—September 18, 2015— Nearly a month after the start of school, the General Assembly finalized the 2015-2016 budget which the Governor signed into law on the same day. Public Schools First NC was disappointed that the new biennial budget did not do more to restore public education funding since the 2013-15 budget cuts reduced the number of teacher and teacher assistant positions and funding for classroom resources, “With our economy improving and our revenues increasing, it is a good time to invest in public education to help us restore the losses of the last budget cycle,” said Yevonne Brannon, Chair, Public Schools First NC. “As our economy shows signs of recovery, it is surprising to see our state legislature not use this opportunity to invest in our teachers and their students and get us back on track to providing our children with a world-class education. Instead, tax cuts are being handed out to the wealthy again while teachers and teacher assistants are struggling to make ends meet—with many either leaving the profession or going to neighboring states where they can earn a living wage. Instead of using the revenue increases to move ahead, we are just trading water.”

The per-pupil expenditure ranks 46th in the nation; we are spending \$877 less than we did in 2008 and spending about half for textbooks as we were in 2009. We continue to rank only 42nd in the nation in teacher pay and nearly 70 percent of our experienced teachers will not get a raise in this two-year budget. These current funding challenges are compounded by a steady annual increase in student enrollment while we see again this year significant tax dollars being diverted from public schools to private schools; a 129% funding increase for school vouchers.

2015-2016 Budget Highlights:

- Increases School Vouchers by \$6.8 million in 2015-16 (total of \$17.6 M) and \$14 million in 2016-17 (total of \$24.8 M); a total increase of 129% over 2014-15 funding level.
- Nearly 70 percent of NC public school teachers will receive no salary increase in this budget. Beginning teachers pay is increased \$2,000. Teacher pay ranks 42nd in the nation.
- Teacher Assistants are funded at same level as last year. Funds about 15,300 teacher assistants (about 7,200 fewer Teacher Assistants than in 2008).

- Per pupil expenditures is \$877 less than in 2008. NC ranks 46th in the nation.
- All State employees/school personnel receive a one-time \$750 bonus.
- Funding for textbook and digital resources is increased by \$21.8 million in 2015-16 and another \$31 million next year; spending about half of the amount on textbooks annually than we did in 2009.
- Funds Driver Education for 2015-2016 (general fund) and 2016-2017 (civil penalty and forfeiture fund). School districts can charge up to \$65 per student to fund driver's education.
- Funds only 28,400 pre-K slots, a decrease of 5,400 slots since 2008.

In a statement released today from North Carolina Association of Educators President Rodney Ellis, "The General Assembly's budget doesn't come close to meeting the needs of our students and public schools. North Carolina can't afford to lose a generation of students by disregarding the resources they need to be successful. With a per-pupil spending ranking of 46th and an average teacher pay ranking of 42nd, state lawmakers wasted an opportunity to invest a nearly \$450 million surplus in our students.

Many public education critics who claim that our schools are failing and need to be fixed are ignoring the fact that graduation rates are at an all-time high, and dropout rates at an all-time low. These accomplishments come despite the fact that North Carolina's public schools have been chronically underfunded. In reality, it seems like these critics are willing public education to failure by draining funds for the educators and programs that are the key to student success and ultimately, to North Carolina's prosperity.

View more information and additional highlights of the 2015-17 NC Biennial Budget here:
<http://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/2015/09/16/update-on-2015-17-nc-biennial-budget/>

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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. Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/publicschoolsfirstnc. Follow us on Twitter: @PS1NC.

PSFNC's vision is for an inclusive, fair, innovative and accountable public education system that nurtures and prepares each child for success in school and life.