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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information Contact:

Brigitte Blom Ramsey, Executive Director

(office) 859-233-9849

(cell) 859-322-8999

brigitte.blomramsey@prichardcommittee.org

Kentucky Lawmakers Override Governor's Veto of Biennial Budget & Revenue Bill Additional Comprehensive Tax Reform Still Necessary to Meet our Goals in Education

Approaching the close of what has been a tumultuous legislative session, state lawmakers voted to override Governor Matt Bevin's vetoes of the budget for the next two years, as well as a separate revenue measure that raised additional public funds through a series of tax changes. "While these veto overrides move us forward, it is clear more progress must be made to stem the erosion of Kentucky's commitment to education and increase the investments necessary to advance our progress," said Brigitte Blom Ramsey, executive director of the Prichard Committee adding, "the energy displayed this session by so many citizens and educators proves the support for public education is there and must be harnessed into investment that increases student achievement."

While lawmakers sought to moderate impacts to base SEEK funding, school transportation funding, and funding for school employee health insurance, cuts to preschool services and other supports for teaching and learning, like professional development and instructional materials, will create unnecessary barriers to student success. For postsecondary, modest increases for state need-based financial aid programs "are sorely tempered by the continued disinvestment in Kentucky's colleges and universities at a time when heightened accountability through performance-based funding is just being implemented," said Perry Papka, senior policy director for the Committee.

Kentucky has not only hit a plateau in education progress, we are clearly backsliding. **Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released this week reveal a troubling trend, showing stalled progress in learning results for all students.** Relative to the other 50 states, Kentucky now ranks:

- 17th in grade 4 reading, down from 8th in 2015
- 31st in grade 8 reading, down from 19th in 2015
- 29th in grade 4 mathematics, down from 21st in 2015
- 37th in grade 8 math, a small improvement over 39th in 2015

We have also seen declining rankings in the last decade on some other important indicators, so that Kentucky now ranks:

- 40th in preschool participation – down from 24th
- 25th in teacher salaries – down from 22nd
- 27th in per-pupil finding for higher education – down from 12th

Based on Kentucky's statewide assessments, only 56 percent of Kentucky's 3rd graders are proficient in reading and only 51 percent in mathematics. Only 66 percent of Kentucky's high school graduates are college and career ready. Further, we lag the nation in postsecondary attainment and in receipt of STEM postsecondary degrees. And, unacceptable achievement gaps persist – from early childhood through postsecondary.

Kentucky must return to a sense of urgency to increase our educational progress for the future. A commitment to innovation, persistence AND adequate and equitable funding for education will be key to meeting the ambitious goals set recently by the Kentucky Department of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education.

We are not investing in a vacuum. Other states are increasing their investment from early childhood through postsecondary, recognizing human capital as the primary economic engine of a state and the imperative to support a seamless web of educational opportunities necessary for success in school, career and life.

This budget and the energy of this session must be a new beginning in the effort to increase investment in all areas of education. New and sustainable revenue is required, and we urge the General Assembly to follow through on the call for **additional comprehensive tax reform** that results in the resources necessary to further deepen our investment in Kentucky's people.

For detailed analysis of the budget as it has moved through the legislative process please visit the [Prichard Blog](#).

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The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is an independent statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the improvement of education for all Kentuckians.