

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PARENT-LED ADVOCACY GROUPS UNITE IN URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO STAY THE COURSE ON SCHOOL FUNDING**

TOPEKA, KAN. (JANUARY 8, 2019) – Parents from across Kansas are united in our commitment to and concern for our public schools and the children our schools serve.

We have been encouraged by the actions of the 2017 and 2018 Legislatures that stabilized the state budget and allowed for increased funding for our schools after years of cuts and freezes.

The increases have resulted in positive improvements in our children's education. We are beginning to see these improvements in smaller class sizes, the restoration of lost positions that support our children, and increased salaries for our hard-working teachers. With adequate financial support, Kansas schools will be able to better compete with other states in salaries; address the special challenges that keep some students from realizing their potential, from poverty to dyslexia; improve the health and safety of students; and prepare more students with the skills they need to prosper and fill the jobs Kansas needs to thrive. We are confident that our schools are finally beginning to move ahead again in ways that we have not seen since the 2006 Montoy resolution and in ways that will pay off for the children in our schools today.

We are united and stand here today to encourage state officials to work in a bipartisan manner to respond to the Supreme Court's June 2018 decision. This ruling is a bright light, showing us that we are very close to finally having a fully constitutional school funding formula that stands the tests of both equity and adequacy. The way forward is clear. We call upon the 2019 Legislature to consider three requests:

We ask our state legislators to provide the funding that addresses the inflation factor as noted by the Court. We ask that the legislature adopt the amount recommended by the Kansas State Board of Education in July. We believe that the dollars necessary are reasonable and available within the enhanced revenue picture the state has been experiencing since passing tax reform measures in 2017.

We ask our state legislators to retain the current formula. The Court was clear that the formula crafted over the last two years meets the constitutional standard except that it is not fully funded. The Court found the method of distributing aid across our state to be appropriate and equitable. Changing the formula again would only extend litigation and would be counterproductive.

Finally, we ask our state legislators to preserve the constitution. We believe it is imperative that our Kansas legislators know that parents value Article VI. We are grateful for the protections this deliberate and thoughtful language provides for our children's future and that of our state. We oppose a constitutional amendment and firmly believe that no good would come of any changes. While we respect meaningful dialogue, we believe Kansas faces more pressing issues than a debate on the merits

of a constitutional amendment. An amendment such as those proposed last year reflects a disrespect for the separation of powers designed by our founders, is contrary to Kansans' historic support for public education, and is not necessary.

By meeting these three actions early in the 2019 session, the Legislature could expect a timely decision from the Court approving their action. This critical policy issue could be put to rest, allowing the Legislature to focus on the many other issues facing our state. It would also provide our school districts with financial certainty and opportunity for planning before next year's budgets are due.

Now is the time we can finally put the years of the Montoy and Gannon lawsuits behind us. We urge the Kansas Legislature to come together, continuing in the directions taken in 2017 and 2018, for the benefit of all our children.

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