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Statement of John Affeldt, Public Advocates Managing Attorney, on Governor Brown's K-12 Spending Plan

San Francisco, CA – We are all appreciative of the additional funding for schools that Governor Brown's budget proposes for 2015-16, an 8% increase over last year to \$65.7 billion. However, this increase—which is mandated by the minimum school funding formula set out in Prop 98—is neither cause for celebration nor for moving on to other priorities. Our public schools will remain among the worst funded in the nation even if this budget is adopted, and our children will continue to suffer for it.

Last year's *Quality Counts* report by *Education Week* ranked California [50th in per pupil spending](#) across the nation. This year's, which came out this week, [inches the state up to 46th](#). The Governor's budget and the new Local Control Funding Formula only have us on track to return, by 2020-21, to 2007-08 levels [when we were 44th in per pupil spending](#). The projection that in 6 years we will actually "improve" to the beleaguered days of 07-08 when we were scraping along at 44th in the nation is, sadly, but a hope that itself rests on two very shaky pillars. First, it assumes that Prop 30's temporary taxes somehow will be extended and second, that the economy will only continue to grow. If either of these assumptions fail, it will be many years more before LCFF can be "fully" funded at even the inadequate 07-08 level.

Yet even assuming all the pieces remain in place to return California to 07-08 spending levels in 6 years time, our schools still won't have the spending power they did in 07-08. This is because now districts are obligated to pay a much larger share of teacher retirement benefits thanks to a late budget deal pushed through by the Administration last summer. The Governor's much-needed fix to the unfunded liabilities in the State Teacher Retirement System unfortunately [has placed the bulk of the "solution" on the backs of students](#), removing billions of dollars annually from core educational services and LCFF's promised increases and improvements in services for high need students.

All this scarcity in funding translates to a paucity of adults to do the job of educating our students to graduate college and career ready with 21st century skills. California has the lowest staff-to-student ratio in the nation, taking together teachers, administrators, and support personnel like counselors, librarians and nurses. We are simply starving our students of the supports they need to succeed—especially considering that we have among the country's highest percentage of students who are either low-income or English learners or both.

In considering the Governor's budget, the Legislature should, therefore, convene public hearings that will: (1) examine the shortfall between our current school funding and that needed to deliver the standards-based educational program the state has adopted as necessary for all its students and (2) map out a multi-year path to achieve funding adequacy.

Until the funding adequacy problem is addressed and a revenue enhancement roadmap is adopted, a fundamental flaw in California's educational system will remain. School funding will continue to be determined based on what the state has available rather than on what the system needs to deliver meaningful learning opportunities to students.