



Press Statement: Governor Hobbs' Executive Budget Provides Opportunity

(PHOENIX, AZ) – The proposed executive budget by Governor Hobbs is a sign of her strong commitment to improving education in our state. Stand for Children Arizona praises the prioritization of meaningful investments into K-12 education in the budget. Executive Director, Rebecca Gau, shares, “The funding Governor Hobbs is proposing to include, and exclude, from this upcoming fiscal year creates immense opportunity for the legislature to fulfill its obligation to support public education in ways that Arizona voters support.” According to Stand for Children Arizona December 2022 public opinion survey results, 69% of surveyed voters believe there is “Great” or “Some” need for additional public school funding in Arizona.

“Students and families have been waiting for too long to see the investments in their local schools that have been promised over and over by state leaders,” Gau continues. “With a worsening teacher retention crisis and state policies such as the Aggregate Expenditure Limit (AEL) and Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) vouchers creating burdensome obstacles for our schools, strong leadership from Governor Hobbs and the state legislature is needed now, more than ever.” The majority of Arizonans (57%) feel the state is on the wrong track and give the legislature the worst ratings in five years, according to our surveyed voters.

With a proposed repeal of the universal expansion of ESA vouchers, the budget saves taxpayers \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years. The Arizona Department of Education recently reported that 75 percent of voucher recipients were not previously enrolled in public schools. The other 25 percent mostly come from districts that do not receive state K-12 funding because of high property tax revenues. As an organization that works toward a fair and effective education system for all students, Stand for Children does not support an ESA voucher system that has no accountability or guardrails. Additionally, the Stand for Children May 2022 public opinion poll found that the majority of surveyed voters do not support the ESA voucher program, and a majority of Republicans felt there should be at least some accountability. The current program has none.

“Stand for Children applauds Governor Hobbs for showing strong leadership in support of a diverse and constantly changing student body with her executive budget by increasing per pupil spending from \$7,999 to \$8,250, targeting support for students with special needs and in high poverty areas, and supporting families directly with a \$100 child tax credit,” said Daniel Hernandez, Government Affairs Director at Stand for Children Arizona. “It is now time for the legislature to respond, and voters are watching,” he continued.

When asked to evaluate the Arizona legislature, 54% of surveyed Arizonans gave state leaders an unfavorable rating (the worst in the history of the poll). The Governor’s budget opens a door for state leaders to deliver. Stand for Children Arizona calls upon legislative leaders on both sides of the aisle to put kids before politics, and looks forward to partnering with leaders to make that happen.

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Stand for Children Arizona is a nonprofit advocacy organization that focuses on empowering and educating parents, teachers, and community members to become active leaders and serve as a voice for children at the state and local level. Our mission is simple: to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, graduate from high school prepared for, and with access to, a college education. For more information, visit www.stand.org/arizona