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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from Education Trust West Director Russlynn Ali on Two Education Funding Studies Released Today

The Education Trust in Washington D.C. released a report today, *“The Funding Gap,”* which documents large funding gaps between high- and low- poverty and –minority districts across the nation. Another study released today by the Public Policy Institute of California, *“High Expectations, Modest Means: The Challenge Facing California’s Public Schools”* reinforces that California’s poor and minority students can little afford the kinds of shortfalls evidenced in the Education Trust’s report.

Together these reports show clearly that while California’s education funding system is more equitable than that of many other states, we’re providing less dollars overall to educate our students than most other states. And, of the dollars that we do have, we allocate less money to California’s districts educating the most poor and minority students.

We’re starving *all* of California’s students. To make matters worse, we starve *some students more* – and these are the students that need the most.

The Education Trust report shows that California’s students needing the most often get the least.

Most analyses of school funding, including reports by the GAO and NCES, attempt to account for the extra costs of educating students living in poverty. But *even without* taking into account these additional costs, high-minority districts in California receive **\$269 per student less** in state and local funds than low-minority districts. For the average middle school in California, this means a difference of \$246,000 annually, enough to pay for 3 to 4 new teachers.

The report also shows that we’re headed in the wrong direction. The funding gap between California’s highest-poverty and lowest-poverty districts **grew by \$219** from \$35 between 1997 to 2001.

When making the widely used 40% adjustment for educating low income students, California’s gap is substantial. Our highest-poverty districts get \$486 less per pupil, and our highest-minority districts receive \$581 less per pupil.

The study by the Public Policy Institute of California concludes that the average per pupil spending in California is significantly lower than many other states. This comes as a

result of spending a lower percentage of our state's resources on K-12 education (despite high government spending generally) and the fact that California educates 8% more students per capita than the nation as a whole.

Let us be clear: The Education Trust West does not suggest that schools and districts cannot do anything to improve until they get more money. Schools can improve and students can learn to high standards. Now. But as the reports released today make obvious, more money, spent more equitably and wisely, would help.

The Education Trust West is the west coast presence of the national policy organization the Education Trust, and is devoted to closing achievement gaps in California. Its Director, Russlynn Ali, is a member of the Quality Education Commission, highlighted in the PPIC report released today.

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