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STATEMENT BY THE EDUCATION TRUST—WEST ON TEACHER AND STAFF LAYOFFS

(Oakland, CA) – Today, the California Department of Education (CDE) announced that 22,000 teachers and staff in public schools will receive layoff notices. The pending \$2.4 billion cut to California’s public schools comes on top of two years of massive budget cuts that have resulted in tens of thousands of teachers and other staff losing their jobs.

“These layoffs are the result of three straight years of budget cuts”, said Arun Ramanathan, executive director of The Education Trust—West. “Teachers are the lifeblood of our public school system and these ongoing cuts are placing our public school system on life support. It is long past time for California to find a responsible budget solution that fully funds our public schools.”

Once again, California’s low-income students and students of color will bear the largest brunt of these cuts. Our highest need students already languish from a lack of resources and investment in underfunded schools with the highest concentration of less senior teachers. Because California districts must make layoff decisions based solely on seniority, schools serving mostly low-income students and students of color suffer the greatest upheaval. These are the schools and students most in need of staff and instructional stability. These are the schools that should never have to lose their best young teachers.

California can however ease some of the impact on high-need, low-performing and high-poverty schools by being smarter about how it lays off teachers. The state should allow districts to use other factors in making layoff decisions, including teacher effectiveness. Not all teachers are the same and high-need schools should not have to lose effective teachers simply because they have fewer years of service.

“Teachers are the single most important factor to student success. While any layoffs are appalling, the current system makes a bad situation worse by treating all schools the same and emphasizing teacher seniority over effectiveness,” concluded Ramanathan. “We cannot expect our highest-need schools to improve if they are constantly losing the two most important factors in their long-term success – the stability of their teaching staffs and their best young teachers.”

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About the Education Trust—West

The Education Trust—West is the West Coast partner of the national policy organization, the Education Trust. The organization works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, kindergarten through college with an emphasis on serving low-income, Latino, African-American and Native American students. The Education Trust—West works alongside policymakers, parents, education professionals, and business and community leaders, in cities and towns throughout California, who are trying to transform their schools and colleges into institutions that genuinely serve all students. To learn more about The Education Trust—West, visit www.edtrustwest.org.