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## **STATEMENT BY THE EDUCATION TRUST—WEST ON RACE TO THE TOP FINALISTS**

**(Oakland, CA)** – Today, the US Department of Education released the list of finalists for Phase One of the Race to the Top Competition (RTT). California was glaringly absent from the list. Given our state's \$20 billion dollar budget deficit and some of the widest achievement gaps in the nation, our failure to produce a competitive application is deeply disappointing.

Despite President Obama and Secretary Duncan's clarion call for states to enact dramatic education reforms— particularly for low-income students and students of color – California decided to play it safe. Our leaders failed to pass critical reforms in the area of teacher and leader quality that would have distinguished our application from other states. Instead of focusing on fixing low-performing schools, California lawmakers focused on letting a few parents leave our lowest performing schools.

"Giving someone an exit strategy from a low-performing school is not the same as improving the learning conditions inside of those schools", said Arun Ramanathan, Executive Director for The Education Trust—West. "It flies in the face of what parents and students want most – quality public schools led by great principals and staffed by effective teachers within their own communities."

There is good news however. Phase Two of RTT provides California with a second chance. Moving forward, state leaders should look to enact policies that do the following:

- Measure each teachers' impact on student academic growth
- Require annual teacher evaluations to focus on effectiveness
- Place information on teacher effectiveness in the hands of teachers and principals
- Ensure that districts reform hiring and placement practices so that staffing decisions are based on teacher effectiveness and not seniority
- Make certain that high-poverty districts and schools have the financial resources they need to attract and retain highly effective teachers
- Ensure our highest need schools have the flexibility to select their teachers and are protected from the arbitrary placement of teachers by districts based on seniority, especially during layoffs

It is simply impossible to improve student learning without addressing quality of teaching. The U.S. Department of Education knows this and by now, the state of California should know it too.

"California should have taken the lead in this race, and not just because we need the money. We should've taken the lead because as it stands now, our students are the furthest behind. And more importantly – we know better," concluded Ramanathan. "If we are going to have a chance at Phase Two of Race to the Top, state leaders must craft and pass bold reforms that would change the way we measure teacher quality and staff our highest-need schools. It is only in this way that we will ever truly address the educational crisis plaguing children of color and children in poverty in California."

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