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PTA, O'Connell, Business Leaders Rally to Protect Education Funding

PTA Calls on Legislators to Fully Support Students

GLENDALE – The California State PTA led a rally and press conference Tuesday morning to protest deep cuts proposed for education in the face of the state's budget crisis, and to promote the PTA's economic recovery plan for California: Investing more in children.

"We cannot afford to move backward in education funding. If we do, we put an entire generation of children at risk, and that threatens our future workforce and economy," Pam Brady, President of the California State PTA, told the parents, business, community and education leaders, who gathered at the rally at Glenoaks Elementary School in Glendale.

"The severe cuts being debated in Sacramento would completely derail California's commitment to a world-class education for all students," Brady added. "We are already 47th in the nation in terms of how much we spend per student. These cuts would make us dead last."

"California is in crisis, plain and simple, and each day that goes by without a budget agreement makes our state's fiscal crisis worse," Jack O'Connell, California's Superintendent of Public Instruction, told the crowd.

"While I recognize that we all need to sacrifice in order to close a budget gap of this magnitude, it is absolutely critical that the governor and the legislative leadership take a balanced approach to closing this deficit that includes a mix of cuts and significant revenue increases," O'Connell added. "If we want California to thrive, both now and well into the future, we can't make cuts to public education that would halt the progress we have been making to improve student achievement and narrow the achievement gap."

Dr. Mike Gruning, past chair and current board member of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, focused on the ways adequate funding for education is good for business and communities.

"In Santa Monica, there is a great symbiotic relationship among the chamber of commerce, the school district and the city," Gruning said. "The chamber has long been a vocal advocate supporting bond measures and parcel taxes to benefit our schools because we believe that good schools make for a great community."

"We agree with a recent RAND Corporation report that found a direct relationship between a

better educated community and reduced levels of crime, greater civic involvement, higher tax revenues, and increased property values," Gruning added.

As budget negotiations continue in Sacramento, the PTA has joined with many others to urge Sacramento to find a balanced approach to solving the budget crisis, one that includes more revenues to prevent deeper cuts to education and children's programs.

The governor and legislators are considering cutting education funding by as much as \$11 billion on top of \$3 billion in cuts already absorbed by schools. In addition, funding manipulations and a potential spending cap would permanently secure California's place at the bottom of all states in what we invest in our students, on a per-pupil basis.

Also speaking at the rally and press conference were: Glendale Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Michael Escalante; Glendale Unified School District Board President Joylene Wagner; Glendale Educational Foundation President John Sadd; President of the 31st District PTA (in the Los Angeles Unified School District) Dell Goodman; and California State PTA Student Board Member Joey Apikian, a 17-year-old student at Granada Hills Charter High School.

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The California State PTA has nearly 1 million members throughout the state working on behalf of public schools, children and families, with the motto, "Every child, one voice." The PTA is the nation's oldest, largest and highest profile volunteer organization working to improve the education, health and welfare of all children and youth. The PTA also advocates at national, state and local levels for education and family issues. The PTA is nonprofit, nonsectarian and noncommercial.

For more information about the California State PTA, visit www.capta.org.