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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION | WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

May 14, 2014

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TO: Members of the North Carolina General Assembly

FROM: William W. Cobey, Chairman
North Carolina State Board of Education

June St. Clair Atkinson, State Superintendent
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Funding of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching

We write on behalf of the North Carolina State Board of Education members to advocate for restored and recurring funding for the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT). This critically needed research-based professional development program serves North Carolina teachers across the state; it provides unparalleled programs in a dynamic atmosphere of respect and dignity. Teachers engage with their colleagues in scholarly, in-depth activities; they examine and challenge their ideas about teaching and learning; and they develop professional networks with their fellow participants.

NCCAT currently faces issues with funding sustainability and quite possibly closure if funding is not restored immediately. In the past year, Dr. Richard Thompson was asked to serve as the NCCAT Interim Executive Director to study and develop collaboratively new ideas for NCCAT and its program delivery. Considerable effort invested during the past year has focused on expanding state-of-the-art programs in two critical areas: early grades literacy and digital learning – areas that will have direct positive impact on student achievement and teaching. NCCAT staff is also expanding its ability to serve many more teachers by providing digital access to and support for programs for teachers statewide.

An alarming number of teachers are leaving the teaching profession in our state every month. While the stagnation of teacher pay is a primary reason, many depart teaching due to lack of professional development and support. NCCAT has evidence that its alumni are more likely to remain in teaching than teachers without such training and support. In addition, principals with NCCAT alumni teachers indicated in a recent NCCAT survey a positive difference in the classroom performance of NCCAT alumni teachers.

As the Legislature convenes on May 14, 2014, we ask that you restore recurring funding to NCCAT. Its budget request also seeks funding for a robust technology infrastructure to facilitate its digital delivery of training and continuous online alumni support. We believe in the programs at NCCAT and are excited about the plans for development of its capacity to reach more teachers. It is a critical time to invest in NCCAT to meet the needs of the teaching profession and to plan robust programs for the 2014-15 program year. We urge you to support NCCAT now and in a manner consistent with your ongoing support to the teaching profession in North Carolina.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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