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Statement from ABOR Chair Bill Ridenour Regarding FY 2019 State Budget

“The first job of the Arizona Board of Regents is to help ensure Arizona students and families have access to an affordable, quality higher education at our public universities. With that in mind, we applaud Governor Doug Ducey, House Speaker J.D. Mesnard, Senate President Steve Yarbrough and legislators for delivering a state budget that makes important investments in public higher education. We are pleased the state budget continues to support funding Arizona resident students at our public universities, which will help increase access and affordability.

The board recognizes and appreciates that K-12 education is the central focus of this budget package. A strong system of public higher education cannot exist without an equally strong K-12 system. Our future university students – and their success at Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona – will depend in large measure on their preparation within the K-12 system.

This budget makes significant and appropriate investments in our public schools, including the Arizona teachers who play such an important role in the lives of young students as they prepare our youth for the future. Among Arizona high school graduates in 2015-16, only 52.5 percent enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately following graduation. These new investments will be critical in improving the success of our students and ultimately reaching the [Achieve60AZ](#) goals endorsed by Governor Ducey.

The budget also provides ongoing support for the ASU School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership and the UA Center for the Philosophy of Freedom. These are institutions with a special focus on topics across the political spectrum, including the U.S. Constitution and free speech. As well, the budget provides support for the NAU W. A. Franke College of Business Economic Policy Institute to advance the institute's mission of rural economic development, financial literacy and entrepreneurialism.

This spending plan maintains the state commitment to capital improvements for research and critical infrastructure across the university system that passed last year. We are also pleased the Legislature and the governor demonstrated their ongoing support for Arizona’s foster children by continuing the tuition waiver program that was set to expire.

Public education – at all levels – is essential to a thriving economy, a first-rate workforce and Arizona’s future. We thank Gov. Ducey and the Arizona Legislature for recognizing public education as the catalyst for economic opportunity in our state. ABOR will continue to be a voice on behalf of Arizona students and families to support and expand access to our world-class public university system.”