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**Statement by Ted Kirsch,
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On Governor's Fiscal 2012 State Budget Proposal**

Gov. Tom Corbett presented a budget plan today that would slash funding for programs that serve some of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens—including young children in classrooms across the state. The governor's \$27 billion spending plan cuts more than \$1 billion from public education at all levels, reduces state support for some public colleges and universities by 50 percent and calls for a freeze on compensation for school district employees.

PHILADELPHIA—With his budget proposal today, Gov. Tom Corbett has made it clear that his vision for our state represents a sharp departure from the values and priorities that most Pennsylvanians embrace. Under Corbett's plan, basic education aid to school districts across the state would be cut for the first time in recent memory.

The children who attend our schools are not going to disappear simply because the governor does not consider them a priority. They still must be educated, and many school districts will be forced to lay off educators and raise property taxes after Gov. Corbett's cuts. The governor is merely shifting a state tax burden onto local governments and school districts.

After taking more than \$1 billion away from public education, Gov. Corbett did not stop with those cuts. He also supports expansion of vouchers that could drain another billion dollars a year from our state's neighborhood public schools. Local school districts will lose control and funding, which instead will be given to unaccountable private schools and the corporations that operate many of them.

The governor's plan for drastic cuts for higher education almost certainly will mean tuition increases, making our state's campuses less accessible and less affordable to students—and their parents—who already are struggling with the lingering effects of the Great Recession. Our community colleges, one of the engines driving Pennsylvania economic development and recovery, are also in line for ill-advised cuts.

The teachers and staff who work in Pennsylvania's schools understand that our state faces severe budget issues, including an estimated \$4 billion revenue shortfall in the coming year as federal funding that helped us survive the recession comes to an end. But necessary sacrifices should be shared sacrifices. Through its cuts to education and other essential services, the budget presented today asks much from those who are least able to shoulder more burdens, and it asks very little from the wealthy and corporate interests—shifting corporate tax obligations to residents across the state who will now be asked to pay more to send their kids to college as well as more in local property taxes.

Any budget is a statement of priorities—Gov. Corbett's budget is a portrait of a bleak future for Pennsylvania. It is a picture in which our children are short-changed.

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