

***Develop new state revenues to support adequate investment
in early childhood, K-12, vocational and higher education***

WHEREAS, U.S. Department of Education data shows that the state of Pennsylvania has the biggest spending gap between wealthy and poor schools spend, per pupil, to educate children, and

WHEREAS, Schools with the highest poverty rates receive one-third fewer state and local tax dollars than the most affluent school districts, and

WHEREAS, The poorest school districts, urban, suburban and rural, have cut librarians, counselors, nurses, tutoring, art, music, honors and other vital programs, and

WHEREAS, 280 of the state's 500 school districts will not have sufficient revenues over the next three years to support mandatory expenditures and 60 percent will face staff and program cuts to balance their budgets (Temple University's Center on Regional Politics), and

WHEREAS, A Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children study found that 113,000 eligible children, or 64 percent, do not have access to early childhood programs, and

WHEREAS, The PPC study found that it would cost an additional \$340 million to serve all eligible children with high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, and

WHEREAS, Years of cuts in state funding for community colleges and public universities has driven up tuition so that today, Pennsylvania's public colleges and universities are the third most expensive public colleges in the country and students graduate with the third highest college loan debt, and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania cut funding to higher education by 33.8 percent between 2008 and 2015, and

WHEREAS, The state's disinvestment in education has resulted in 77 percent of school districts raising taxes in the last school year and 63 percent raising them at or above the Act 1 index, according to the annual survey of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators and the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, and

WHEREAS, We believe that every family should have access to high-quality pre-k programs, great neighborhood public schools and affordable community colleges and public universities, and

WHEREAS, Over the past few years, the legislature has slashed corporate taxes and has balanced the budget by over-estimating revenues, using one-time revenues and borrowing money from dedicated funding – leaving the state with a projected \$1.2 billion budget deficit, and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania legislators along with advocacy and labor groups have developed a “Fair Share Tax Proposal” that proposes changing the tax structure in a way that would cut the deficit and provide the funding necessary to allow the state to invest adequately in education while sparing low- and middle-income families from most of the additional tax burden, and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is the only gas producing state that does not impose an extraction tax on the natural gas industry, and

WHEREAS, Without new and stable sources of revenue, thousands of children will be denied access to pre-school education, public school districts will be forced to squeeze property owners for higher property taxes or slash programs and Pennsylvania colleges and universities will become so expensive that higher education will be out of reach of a majority of families.

BE IT RESOLVED:

AFT Pennsylvania supports proposals to enact a shale tax, close numerous corporate tax loopholes that allow the majority of corporations to be little or no taxes in Pennsylvania and restructure the state tax system to tax wealth at a higher rate than earnings and dividends and ensure that corporations pay their fair share, and

AFT Pennsylvania and its affiliates will educate members about developing new revenue streams to improve the state’s investment in education, and

AFT Pennsylvania and its affiliates will educate and support legislators ready to make the tough decisions necessary to reverse Pennsylvania’s slide into insolvency and put the state on a path to adequately investing in early childhood, K-12 and higher education.