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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SHORTCHANGING L.A. UNIFIED STUDENTS -- \$200 MILLION AT STAKE

New State Funding Requirement Will Leave Out Neediest Children

LOS ANGELES — The California Department of Education (CDE) has instituted a requirement that all school districts, including the Los Angeles Unified School District, provide written documentation of each low income student. This requires more than 138,000 paper applications to be immediately distributed across the District's Provision 2 schools.

At these nearly 400 high-poverty campuses, all students automatically qualify for subsidized lunches so under federal rules parents don't have to fill out paperwork. Now they must submit verification or L.A. Unified will lose substantial state funding designated for low-income students. This requirement conflicts with federal regulations regarding these families' participation in the Free and Reduced Price Meals program. But the CDE is requiring it, and as a result, the District is urgently marshaling staff and outreach to ensure L.A. Unified does not face a massive budget shortfall next year due to low return rates of the paper application.

L.A. Unified has among the highest concentrations of low-income students in the state, with more than 80% living at or below the poverty line. Because the new Local Control Funding Formula provides significant additional state funding for low-income students, a failure to document each one directly reduces funding to the District. Given how many students and their families are impacted by poverty, the failure to collect every single form will cost the District dearly. The total amount of funding at stake is more than \$200 million.

"We are not asking for anything extra, only our fair share," said Superintendent John Deasy. "Public education lifts children out of poverty. LAUSD needs every dollar that we are entitled to, based on the number of high-poverty students and not limited to those whose parents or guardians are required to fill out a verification form. All poor children should be included." That inclusion could have been easily achieved if the state had decided to use federal rules for recognizing these students and their families, without the nightmare and expense of printing, distributing, following up, and collecting 138,275 paper applications in the next two months.

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To make sure all students receive the funding they are due, the District has implemented multiple outreach efforts. Dr. Deasy has alerted schools. All affected LAUSD families will receive a ConnectEd call in the coming days at home, to request their help in completing and returning the form. Principals are sending letters to parents and guardians and distributing alternative household income forms to students. Teachers are talking with their students to ensure they take home the information. The form must be completed and returned by Dec. 6. By mid-December, the level of student participation will be known and the District will begin a second follow-up outreach campaign to collect the remaining applications that may be outstanding from the pool of 138,275 paper forms that must be collected.

The stakes are high. The District is marshaling resources to maximize awareness; participation and completion of the forms in order to secure the state funding our students are owed. Parents and guardians need to know if they have received a form it is critical that they fill it out return it to the school.

All eligible students in L.A. Unified should be counted. No child should be left out.

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