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FEA president: Education budget proposal falls far short of a meaningful investment in our kids

TALLAHASSEE – Statement from Florida Education Association President Andy Ford on Gov. Rick Scott’s public education budget proposal:

“When he was running for governor, Rick Scott promised not to cut funding for public education. Once elected, however, he presided over a budget that slashed education by nearly 8 percent, took 3 percent out of the paychecks of every public school employee and green-lighted massive unfunded mandates for school districts.

“But now the governor has been telling anyone who’ll listen how much he values the state’s ‘investment’ in education. But today’s budget proposal shows just those words are empty. If his budget proposal is enacted, spending will still stand nearly \$800 per student less than our state’s commitment to education five years ago, the unfunded mandates are still in place, pre-K remains woefully underfunded and the brain drain at our public colleges and universities continues as universities in other states continue to gobble up our professors. Meanwhile, Florida continues to languish at the bottom of the national rankings for funding for public education.

“A real investment in public education would bolster our state’s future. Today’s budget proposal seeks to put a smiley face on the massive budget cuts of the past few years and ignores the realities that our children aren’t getting the education they need. The governor says he wants to create high-paying jobs for Florida by investing in public education, but this budget proposal puts little more than a Band-Aid on the massive cuts of the past few years. The governor’s budget proposal is miles away from a real investment in public education.”

The Florida Education Association is the state’s largest association of professional employees, with more than 140,000 members. FEA represents pre K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, educational support professionals, students at our colleges and universities preparing to become teachers and retired education employees.