



For Immediate Release

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**Statement from Terry Brooks, Executive Director,
Kentucky Youth Advocates on HB 301**

The House Education Committee took action to stimulate Kentucky's economy this afternoon by unanimously sending a bill to the full House to raise the mandatory age of school attendance to age 18. A high school diploma is, in fact, the best economic stimulus any individual can have in the long term, and the economic benefits extend to the state as well. With the vote today, the committee members joined the Governor and First Lady in taking steps to make a difference for Kentucky's young people today and for the Commonwealth in the future.

When approved by the full House and Senate, Kentucky will join 29 other states and the District of Columbia in recognizing the important role of increasing the mandatory age of attendance in improving the graduation rate. The phase-in approach of the legislation is a practical way to ensure that schools have the time for a smooth and effective implementation. It is important to note that many of the practices which have been found successful in other states to increase graduation – such as school/work apprenticeships and dual credit tracks – are already in place in many Kentucky high schools. These successful examples show the work of keeping youth engaged can and is happening now.

Clearly this legislation is a student-focused effort. Beyond that, however, it is important to remember that increasing high school graduation transcends schools and impacts the market place. The Alliance for Excellent Education points out that:

- Nearly 16,200 students did not graduate from Kentucky's high schools in 2009; the lost lifetime earnings in Kentucky for that class of dropouts alone totals more than \$4.2 billion.
- Kentucky would save more than \$161.8 million in health care costs over the course of the lifetimes of each class of dropouts had they earned their diplomas.
- Kentucky households would have over \$1.5 billion more in accumulated wealth if all heads of households had graduated from high school.
- About \$291 million would be added to Kentucky's economy by 2020 if students of color graduated at the same rate as white students.

- If Kentucky's high schools graduated all students ready for college, the state would save almost \$52.3 million a year in community college remediation costs and lost earnings.
- Kentucky's economy would see a combination of savings and revenue of about \$87.4 million in reduced crime spending and increased earnings each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5 percent.

Increasing the high school graduation rate will reap benefits for individuals and position Kentucky for improving our economic competitiveness.

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***Kentucky Youth Advocates** is a non-partisan, non-profit, children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.*