Together NC Statement in Reaction to House Budget Subcommittee Recommendations

RALEIGH (April 12, 2011) – Late this afternoon, budget subcommittee chairs in the NC House of Representatives released their budget proposals, which if implemented, would abandon North Carolina's long-standing commitment to education, economic growth and innovation. While this is just the start of a lengthy legislative budget process, the recommendations revealed today show that House legislative leaders have decided to take an extreme, cuts-only approach to North Carolina's fiscal challenges, one that will put this state back decades and cripple our economic recovery.

Cuts recommended today by budget subcommittee chairs include:

- Drastic cuts to NC's nationally-recognized early childhood programs Smart Start and More at Four;
- Elimination of all teacher's assistants except in grades K-1;
- A 15.5% cut to the public university system that would result in the elimination of thousands of classes and hundreds of faculty laid off;
- Elimination of Sentencing Services and dramatic court fee increases;
- 25% reduction in funding for community economic development agencies;
- At least $43 million cut from mental health services.

These proposed cuts would not be only deep and damaging to North Carolina's people and places, but they are also avoidable. Up to this point, legislative leaders have refused to consider raising new revenue or even maintaining current revenue streams. For example, if the legislature chose to continue the tax package passed in 2009, it could maintain funding for state mental health services, restore the cut to our university system, keep teacher's assistants in the classroom and maintain Smart Start.

This practical, balanced approach is also what most North Carolinians want to see. In a recent poll, over 70% of North Carolinians stated that they would rather extend the temporary sales tax than make deep cuts to state programs. Furthermore, support for other revenue-enhancing proposals such as implementing combined reporting and broadening the base of the sales tax also enjoy strong public support. Unfortunately, legislators are ignoring the will of the public in order to pursue an extreme, ideological agenda.

If North Carolina's leaders are serious about paving the way for successful families and communities, then they must maintain investments in vital public systems and structures – our schools, our hospitals, our colleges, our roads, our first responders, and so much more. The only way to do that is to take a practical, balanced approach to the state budget, and that means including equitable, stable, and adequate revenue sources in the budget.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Together NC coordinators: Louisa Warren, (919) 801-0465, louisa@ncjustice.org or Rob Thompson, (919) 649-2449, rob@nccovenant.org.