

## **Together NC Statement on House Budget**

**RALEIGH (May 4, 2011)**--The deep cuts included in the House budget abandon our state's traditional commitment to education, economic growth and innovation in favor of an inflexible and ideological approach to managing our state's resources.

The UNC system and K-12 schools suffered budget cuts of \$447 million and \$759 million, respectively. Medicaid, which has been a lifeline for working families hit by the recession, is facing over \$2 billion in cuts over the next two years. North Carolina's award-winning early childhood programs, More at Four and Smart Start, have been deeply cut—to the tune of over \$130 million—and restructured in way that undermines the core missions of each program. Lastly, the legislature would gut environmental enforcement programs and eliminate the state's ability to purchase and protect vulnerable wild areas.

It's both frustrating and reassuring to know that all of these cuts were avoidable. Since the beginning of the current legislative session in January (and even since hitting the campaign stump last fall), legislative leaders have remained obstinate in their refusal to consider new revenues or even maintain current revenue streams as a solution to the current budget crisis. Rather, they have held tightly to a rigid, impractical view that the budget should be balanced with cuts alone.

Despite Speaker Tillis' refrain that all options are on the table, it's been clear all along that all options have not been considered.

For example, if legislators had decided to simply maintain the tax package passed in 2009 (a one-cent sales tax increase and a small income tax surcharge for high earners), they could have maintained current funding levels for K-12 education, the UNC system, community colleges, and the More at Four and Smart Start early childhood programs.

Instead, we're heading down a new path that favors ideology at the expense of pragmatism and progress. Furthermore, it's a path that ignores the will of the people. Multiple polls conducted by Elon University and Public Policy Polling demonstrate that North Carolinians strongly support, by a 3 to 1 margin, additional revenue to maintain our state's public investments. Fortunately, the process isn't over. We hope that the Senate will reconsider these drastic and unnecessary budget cuts.

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*Together NC is a collection of more than 120 non-profit organizations, service providers, and professional associations who have come together to promote wise choices for shared prosperity for all North Carolinians. For more information, visit [www.togethernc.org](http://www.togethernc.org)*

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