Louisiana’s education reform journey began decades ago with notable initiatives such as vouchers and teacher evaluation/professional development in the 1980s; a charter school law and the creation of an accountability system in the 1990s; major expansions of school choice, school board reform, and accountability and school letter grades in the years thereafter. These initiatives have yielded meaningful progress for students as measured on a number of indicators (state tests, graduation rates, improvement in ACT scores, etc.), and options for parents and students have never been greater. Additionally, following are five recommendations that LABI believes should be part of the new administration, legislative, and BESE agendas over the next four years. The emphasis is on maintaining the progress made in education reform initiatives, especially regarding school choice; taxpayer accountability; and increasing the focus on skills training and technology in school; and raising expectations for everyone in the education system.

Repeat Number One—Maintain Our Momentum!

The need to address funding challenges, called the Minimum Foundation Program or MFP, was designed to provide a basic level of education for students in the state with an assurance of equity. The current MFP is $3.7 billion for approximately 700,000 students. Federal funding adds an additional $600 million to this base. LABI, along with the Legislative Committee, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and the Governor’s Office, will continue to work closely with the leadership to ensure that education is at the top of the agenda and that the necessary funding is invested for all students so that funding suits the child, as opposed to the child having to suit the funding. State leaders should review education funding to determine the actual cost of providing a quality education and ensure that the dollars are being spent in the most productive manner. Louisiana’s education reform journey began decades ago with notable initiatives such as vouchers and teacher evaluation/professional development in the 1980s; a charter school law and the creation of an accountability system in the 1990s; major expansions of school choice, school board reform, and accountability and school letter grades in the years thereafter. These initiatives have yielded meaningful progress for students as measured on a number of indicators (state tests, graduation rates, improvement in ACT scores, etc.), and options for parents and students have never been greater. Additionally, following are five recommendations that LABI believes should be part of the new administration, legislative, and BESE agendas over the next four years. The emphasis is on maintaining the progress made in education reform initiatives, especially regarding school choice; taxpayer accountability; and increasing the focus on skills training and technology in school; and raising expectations for everyone in the education system.

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The MFP formula takes into account a number of factors such as capacity and wealth of the district. As a result, most districts receive the state’s level of funding by state law; however, LABI believes that, in order to maintain the momentum gained in education reform initiatives, especially regarding school choice; the Governor’s Office, will continue to work closely with the leadership to ensure that education is at the top of the agenda and that the necessary funding is invested for all students so that funding suits the child, as opposed to the child having to suit the funding. State leaders should review education funding to determine the actual cost of providing a quality education and ensure that the dollars are being spent in the most productive manner. LABI, along with the Legislative Committee, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and the Governor’s Office, will continue to work closely with the leadership to ensure that education is at the top of the agenda and that the necessary funding is invested for all students so that funding suits the child, as opposed to the child having to suit the funding. State leaders should review education funding to determine the actual cost of providing a quality education and ensure that the dollars are being spent in the most productive manner.

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