



**EDUCATION and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CABINET
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

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Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
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Matthew G. Bevin
Governor

Hal Heiner
Secretary

April 12, 2018

An Open Letter to Kentucky Parents

Dear Kentucky Parent:

Over the last few months, there's been a great deal of conversation regarding both Kentucky's pension system for educators and education funding in general. Regardless of what you've heard or read in the news about these topics, it is important to have accurate information. Every day, we teach our students to research, listen to the facts, and arrive at informed opinions about all varieties of topics. As parents, I would encourage each of you to do the same.

Kentucky's students deserve the best teachers and the best classrooms so that they will have the greatest chance for success in the future. Sadly, the fact remains that Kentucky has the worst funded public pension system in the country. This is causing money that normally would go towards classroom funding to shift in order to pay for teachers' and other state employees' retirements. This is not a new problem. The crisis has been growing for years, and it is one Governor Bevin and legislators have been working diligently to fix.

Despite claims to the contrary, the pension reform enacted in this year's Senate Bill 151 has very little effect on teachers. It is important to note that no teacher, current or retired, will lose even one dollar of their pensions earned. Retired teachers will see no changes whatsoever, and the only change for current teachers will be a freeze on using sick days (after Dec. 31, 2018) to count toward retirement. This is a change which the Teachers Retirement System's (TRS) own general counsel stated was not part of the inviolable contract. Moving forward, new teachers will be placed into a hybrid cash balance plan that even the KEA's own actuary admits may provide a better benefit for teachers than the current system.

Another important point largely lost in the noisy debate of recent days involves the Bevin Administration's investment in public education. Union representatives from the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) continue to assert a false narrative that somehow our Governor does not support public education, when the facts demonstrate the complete opposite. There has been a 27 percent increase in education funding in the Commonwealth since 2011 (including pension costs). Governor Bevin has also fully funded pensions, in stark contrast to his predecessors who routinely funded less than 50 percent of TRS requests.

As we move further into the 21st century, education needs for all children are changing, and Kentucky must be able to rise to the challenge of meeting those new demands. But, we cannot continue down this path without meaningful changes to our pension system, our tax code and our state budget.

Teachers fuel the engine of Kentucky education, but parents and caregivers are behind the wheel. I encourage you to talk with your child's teachers — thank them for their service and remind them that while this crisis cannot be solved without tough decisions, it can be solved, and all of Kentucky will flourish as a result.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hal Heiner".

Hal Heiner
Secretary, Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet