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Statement from ABOR Chair Regarding Motions Filed to Dismiss Arizona Attorney General's Lawsuit

"The Arizona Board of Regents had hoped to resolve its differences with the Attorney General without having to file these motions today. The board shares the Attorney General's concerns about the challenges of funding public higher education and remains open to discussion about our mutual concerns. We continue to welcome the spotlight on public higher education and its challenges in Arizona. However, the board believes this lawsuit is unfounded.

Every day, the Arizona Board of Regents works hard, along with our universities' presidents, to ensure our high-quality college degrees are accessible and affordable for Arizona students and families, despite the difficult funding challenges for public higher education.

While the 'good ole days' the Arizona Attorney General longs for, and which he experienced as a student, are gone, I would argue our public higher education system today is better. Today, our universities have record enrollment and diversity, with the addition of 48,000 students since the recession – a testament to the quality and competitive pricing of Arizona's public universities. Graduation rates are also on the rise, as are other key metrics the board has implemented to strengthen the workforce and stimulate Arizona's economy.

The board also put a series of reforms in place to improve affordability at Arizona's public universities, including: development of new degree options; improving and creating new pathways so students can take courses in a lower-cost setting; enhanced transferability of courses between community colleges and universities to facilitate quicker degree completion; and the implementation of a new funding model that prioritizes additional state dollars for the education of Arizona resident students. Our community college transfer program is but one example of these efforts.

The board has made tremendous strides in increasing the transparency and predictability of tuition rates, including: tying tuition to universities' business plans; implementing tuition-

guarantee programs; increasing transparency to the public, including tuition workshops and billing reforms; provided for additional student input as part of the tuition-setting process; and identifying efficiencies to mitigate tuition increases.

Furthermore, given the continued growth and evolution of fees within the university enterprise, the board is currently considering additional policy reforms including: the establishment of a fee sunset-review process; increasing transparency of the universities' fee development process; and development of a summary/guide for students detailing the fee setting process and identifying key contact personnel.

We have and will continue to welcome the spotlight this lawsuit has shined on these funding challenges – challenges certainly not lost on Arizona's students and families. The board is willing to resume discussions that recognize the roles that the Arizona Constitution, Arizona statutes and court decisions have established for the board and for the Attorney General.

A costly lawsuit, shouldered by the people of this state, is not the answer to addressing funding challenges for public higher education. Working together, however, on behalf of the people of this state will open the door to further innovation and solutions.”