

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Members of Kentucky Board of Education file motion challenging Gov. Beshear's executive order that seeks to remove them from board**

In an effort to preserve the non-partisan goals of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), members of the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), individually and in unison, announced today they will be filing a motion to challenge the executive order by Gov. Andy Beshear that seeks to remove all current KBE members without cause.

"We strongly feel that this action by the governor is of questionable legality and must be tested in the courts," said KBE member Dr. Gary Houchens. "Unlike other Kentucky government boards, the make-up of the KBE is governed by the Kentucky Education Reform Act, which provides a clear process for a new governor to appoint new members to the KBE on a staggered basis, every two years. Board members today are seeking to set aside the governor's order and allow an orderly transition of board control over a two year period, as intended by KERA."

The following members of the KBE, appointed by Gov. Matt Bevin in 2016 and 2018, maintain that the intent of KERA was to diminish the role of political expediency in Kentucky education: Hal Heiner, Milton Seymore, Gary Houchens, Ben Cundiff, Laura Timberlake, Tracey Cusick, Rich Gimmel, Kathy Gornik, Alesa Johnson and Joe Papalia.

"Gov. Andy Beshear is taking an action which is unprecedented since the passage of KERA nearly three decades ago," said Houchens. "Every elected governor since then has followed the legally-defined means for replacing board members. Gov. Bevin was in office for more than two years with a board largely comprised of appointees of Gov. Steve Beshear."

During that two-year period, appointees of both Gov. Steve Beshear and Gov. Bevin worked cooperatively to overhaul the state's school assessment and accountability system and to revise high school graduation requirements. In the past two years, the KBE has also worked to initiate the transformation of the Jefferson County Public Schools, increase the emphasis on career and technical education, revise Kentucky's academic standards, and significantly improve performance transparency for every one of the state's public schools via the Kentucky School Report Card.

"We are certainly encouraged that Gov. Andy Beshear will bring a change from the divisive tone in Frankfort," said Houchens. "Our goal in filing this motion is to work cooperatively with the new governor to continue the momentum already in place – not for our sake, but for the sake of Kentucky's 650,000 public school students and their futures."

The full statement by the board members is attached.

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Contact: Gary Houchens (270) 799-9081

Bart Greenwald, attorney (502) 614-6974