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CALIFORNIA TEACHER CORPS PARTNERS WITH RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ADDRESS TEACHER RETENTION NEEDS

*Teacher Corps Programs Increasing Teacher Retention Rates in California's High-need
Regions by Recruiting and Training Local Teachers*

Sacramento, CA – In order to meet the unique needs of rural communities across California, the California Teacher Corps, the statewide organization representing alternative teacher certification programs, today announced that its programs are scaling up efforts with rural school districts across the state to employ targeted, community-based strategies to the recruitment and training of local teachers to teach in rural, high-need public schools.

According to a 2009 report entitled *Why Rural Matters*, by the Rural School and Community Trust, there are over 300,000 California students served by rural school districts. Of these students, more than half are minorities, one in four is an English Language Learner and nearly 50 percent are living in poverty. Serving a diverse, economically disadvantaged student population, as well as being located in geographically isolated communities, California's rural school districts face low retention rates and high turnover of teachers.

To reverse this trend, rural school districts are working with the Teacher Corps to grow the teacher pipeline within their own communities, which includes providing non-traditional teacher preparation options such as distance learning through satellite campuses and online, digital programs.

There are nearly one thousand school districts served by California Teacher Corps programs, of which over a quarter serve high-need, high-poverty rural communities. Of the 70 Teacher Corps programs across the state, 50 percent are directly serving rural districts that have had a difficult time recruiting and retaining highly-qualified teachers, and nearly 15 percent of these programs each serve more than 20 rural districts. These programs include California State University through CSU CalStateTEACH and CSU Chico Special Education, Tulare County Office of Education, Sonoma County Office of Education and the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

“Rural communities in California are experiencing their own unique educational challenges,” said California Teacher Corps President Catherine Kearney. “Geographically isolated, rural

school districts have historically faced high turnover of teachers and are continually struggling with ways to keep their good teachers in the classroom. The California Teacher Corps has made it a high priority to work with these districts to increase their talent pipeline by recruiting and training teachers directly from their community.”

One example is California State University’s CalStateTEACH program, a field-based digital teacher preparation program that is specifically designed for teachers who are unable to attend a classroom-based teacher preparation program. The program utilizes web and other technological tools, such as video conferencing, flip cameras, and Skype to train teachers in the classroom. Through an online curriculum, teachers share ideas through web-based ‘class discussions’ and are connected through video conferencing with veteran educators and mentors throughout the duration of the credential program.

A satellite of the IMPACT program, the Tulare County Office of Education, which serves Kings, Fresno, Northern Kern and Tulare Counties in the Central Valley, is known by its school district partners as the ‘e-harmony’ of teacher recruitment. The County Office recently combined its recruitment center with its certification program to more effectively recruit, train and place local teachers who best matched what the district was looking for into needed teaching positions. This includes second-career professionals, as well as current teacher’s aides, substitute teachers and paraprofessionals. The County Office has over a 90 percent teacher retention rate and has placed more than 400 teachers in rural communities over the past few years.

Lastly, the Sonoma County Office of Education, through its North Coast Beginning Teacher Program, serves the rural communities of Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Nevada and Sonoma Counties. North Coast has focused its efforts not only on the local recruitment of teachers from the community, but also providing the training necessary through satellite campuses for paraprofessionals to shift to full-time teaching. Over the past five years, North Coast has worked to place over 500 teachers in rural schools. Additionally, North Coast has over a 90 percent retention rate for new teachers.

"The strong partnership we have developed with the North Coast Beginning Teacher Program has been very beneficial in meeting the specialized needs of our schools," said Humboldt County Superintendent of Schools Garry Eagles. "Our ability to recruit, mentor, and retain talented teachers is greatly enhanced by NCBTP's alternative certification programs. With satellite campuses and online learning opportunities, many individuals have been empowered to become highly qualified teachers in our communities."

Teacher Corps programs have historically met the varying needs of public schools, including attracting talented individuals and second-career professionals from within the community who bring with them deep content expertise and professional experience. Over the past seven years, alternative certification programs have placed more than 55,000 highly-qualified teachers in California public schools.

About the California Teacher Corps

The California Teacher Corps is a nonprofit organization established in 2009 with the goal of placing 100,000 highly-qualified teachers in California's communities by 2020. The Teacher Corps provides a unified voice for the state's alternative certification programs, effectively and proactively addresses teacher preparation issues facing California and recruits the best and the brightest professionals to teach in the public schools that need them most. CA Teacher Corps membership trains second-career teachers, and others committed to working in hard-to-staff schools, who have deep subject-area expertise and who remain in the teaching profession. For more information, visit the California Teacher Corps at www.cateachercorps.org.

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