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MISSISSIPPI GETS MEDIOCRE MARKS FOR TEACHER POLICIES IN NEW REPORT-- LABELED 'WEAK BUT PROGRESSING'

–Today the National Council on Teacher Quality released a 50-state encyclopedia on states' teacher policies, concluding that while Mississippi takes a leadership role in some areas, many policies are counterproductive to the nation's teacher quality goals –

Washington, DC -- The *State Teacher Policy Yearbook* is the first project of its kind to provide a 360-degree detailed analysis of how states are hurting or helping teacher quality--and what they can do to fix broken and anachronistic policies.

While Mississippi did better than most states, its overall performance shows how much work Mississippi has ahead. In the six areas reviewed, including admission standards into teaching, licensure and compensation reform, Mississippi earned four "C" grades and two "D" grades.

"As is true for all states, Mississippi's approach to the teaching profession needs an overhaul," said Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. "Unlike many states, however, Mississippi does appear to recognize this need and is showing signs of changing."

Among the findings:

- Mississippi grants tenure too soon, providing permanent status to teachers after only two years of classroom experience.
- The state prevents districts from experimenting with new ways of compensating teachers because of a rigid state-wide salary schedule.
- Mississippi neglects the preparation of special education teachers, failing to ensure that these teachers are prepared to teach students with disabilities.

Despite the overall bleak findings, there are some bright spots. For example, unlike many states, Mississippi does not create unnecessary obstacles for out-of-state teachers who want to teach in the state.

To download copies of the Mississippi report, which includes national comparisons, or to purchase printed copies of the report, visit the NCTQ website, www.nctq.org. For questions about the report, please contact Lisa Cohen at (310) 395-2544 or lisa@lisacohen.org or Molly Jackman at (202) 393-0020 (ext. 15) or mjackman@nctq.org.

NCTQ -- comprised of reform-minded Democrats, Republicans, and Independents -- advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies and seeks to lend transparency and accountability to the three institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: state governments, colleges of education, and teachers' unions.

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