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**BLUEPRINT LOUISIANA CONTINUES PUSH FOR REFORM**

BATON ROUGE — Blueprint Louisiana today released a new list of five recommendations for reform it plans to support during the election cycle and the next term of the Louisiana Legislature.

**Prioritize Student Success Over Traditional Practices That Impede Performance in Public Schools.** Our adherence to long-standing models and systems, for tradition's sake, is not delivering the outcomes our students deserve or that our society requires in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is past time to replicate what we know works in public education—high-quality teachers and principals empowered to make performance-based decisions—and implement proven strategies in public schools in our state.

**Create A Single High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten System.** Louisiana should prioritize funding for pre-kindergarten and simplify access through a coordinated statewide program of high quality with accountability for outcomes.

**Re-Engineer Public Retirement and Health Care Benefits for Long-Term Stability.** Louisiana must act now to stem the growth in retirement and health care debt for public employees—both state workers and teachers. The state cannot afford to put off structural and systemic changes that ensure we live up to our commitments now and make more affordable policies for the future.

**Transition Louisiana's Charity Hospitals to Public-Private Partnerships.** The New Orleans network of primary care clinics and the upcoming Baton Rouge partnership between Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and Earl K. Long Hospital are best-practice models that should be applauded and replicated. The state should build on this progress and take the lead to encourage other regional partnerships, allowing Louisiana State University to focus on medical education and research.

**Adopt "Smart on Crime" Reforms that Reduce the Highest Incarceration Rate in the Nation.** Experts attribute "policy choices" as the primary determinant for incarceration rates, not crime itself. Louisiana must re-evaluate business as usual in our prison system and act on the recommendations of the Sentencing Commission to lower costs and improve outcomes.

"Years of experience and poor outcomes demonstrate that business as usual fails to serve our citizens well," said Blueprint Louisiana Chairman Jimmy Maurin, Chairman of Stirling Properties in Covington. "The election season is a time to remind state leaders the people of Louisiana want and deserve better. Bold leadership must be willing to take on tough issues and move us forward."

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The list of reform items is a mix of topics Blueprint has been active in previously — elementary and secondary education, early childhood education, public sector benefits, health care and the justice system. Extensive research was performed over the summer to develop the specific reform recommendations for each topic.

“In recognition of the state’s ongoing fiscal challenges, the new Blueprint Agenda involves no cost to the state,” Maurin said. “While these recommendations do not require additional funds, they do require political will. We look forward to working with all of the experienced and new legislators when they arrive in Baton Rouge early next year.”

Blueprint is presenting the list of recommendations to candidates for the Legislature and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and asking for their support. Blueprint will list on its website the candidates who express support for the agenda.

Established in 2006, Blueprint Louisiana is a citizen-driven effort to identify and implement essential changes to fundamentally improve life and economic opportunity in the state. The group’s original vision for a better Louisiana focused on major governmental reforms in the areas of ethics, education, workforce development, health care, transportation and coastal restoration and hurricane protection. In 2009, it added a “new economy” component (higher education and economic innovation) to its reform agenda. In February 2011, it released a list of policy recommendations focused on the state’s Fiscal Year 2012 budget challenges. The nonpartisan effort is led and supported by community and business leaders from across the state.

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