**College Board Presentation to the Kentucky Budget Review Subcommittee on Education**

**August 4, 2021**

Chairman Tipton and members of the Budget Review Subcommittee on Education, I am Stacy Bassett with the College Board, and I appreciate the opportunity to present to you today about the value and benefit of the additional funding for Advanced Placement or AP Exams included in the 2021-22 budget for Kentucky’s public-school students.

First, thank you. Thank you for providing additional funding in the amount of $2.6 million in the 2021-22 budget to help cover the cost of AP Exams for all public-school students. $1 million already existed for low-income students, those on free and reduced-price lunch, but these additional funds will be now accessible for other public-school students as promised in the 2008 state law.

Admittedly, this increase in funding was something of a surprise. Some funds became available during the budget conference committee discussions and House Majority Floor Leader Steven Rudy suggested that rather than return it to the general fund, that AP, which has been underfunded, would be a good option. The General Assembly agreed, and we’re pleased that it’s in the budget for the 2022 AP Exam administration and encourage continued funding as you develop the 2022-24 budget next year.

Our 2022 AP Exam cost estimates are based on the 2021 administrative data. As you know, this year has been unique in regard to education, but based on this year’s numbers, we anticipate that the $2.6 million for non-low-income public school students will provide a generous subsidy, leaving approximately $9 in out-of-pocket expenses. If it is the intent of the General Assembly to full cover the cost of AP Exams for these students, we estimate that it would require another $400,000. Please note, however, that a reduction from a $96 exam to an approximately $9 exam is a huge savings and will have a positive impact on Kentucky students and families, but I wanted to be transparent about our estimates and to pass those along, particularly since the state acts on a two-year budget.

AP students and teachers have been coming to the Capitol for years talking about the need for AP Exam funding, and this is evidence that you took their concerns seriously and acted when the opportunity became available, and we thank you.

By way of background, the College Board administers the AP program, which is college level coursework offered to high school students in 38 subjects to better prepare them for college and career. Students have the option to take the courses and the exams, which cost $96 each. If a student earns a score of 3 or higher on a scale of 1-5 on the exam, then they are guaranteed some type of college credit at the Commonwealth’s public colleges and universities.

Even with the oddity that was 2020, it’s estimated that Kentucky students earned a potential cost savings of more than $31 million in AP credits. The average 3-hour college course in Kentucky is approximately $1,100. So you can see the benefit of that exchange – a $96 exam for a possible $1,000 in savings.

The exam rather than the course is necessary for earning college credit and tends to give colleges and universities confidence in a student’s mastery. If a student earns a successful score on an AP Exam – the same exam given to students nationwide – then the school knows that the student mastered the content whether the course was taken in Frankfort, Kentucky or Boston, Massachusetts. But the cost of the exam is prohibitive to some students, especially if they’re taking more than one exam or have siblings taking exams at the same time.

Since 2018, the Commonwealth’s state budget has covered the cost of AP exams for low-income student – those on free and reduced lunch – but not for others. But now in 2022, all public-school AP students will get help.

I need to point out that Kentucky has many supportive policies in place to help students who are interested in advanced coursework:

* AP and other programs are included in the state’s education accountability system.
* Kentucky was one of the first states in the country to establish a uniform AP credit policy ensuring that students get college credit for scores of 3 and higher at any public college or university.
* Your state has regularly supported the work of Advance Kentucky, which works to expand student access to and success in rigorous coursework, particularly among student populations traditionally underrepresented in these courses.
* Kentucky includes a KEES bonus for AP low-income students who make a successful score of 3+ on an exam.
* Advanced coursework is included on the state’s school report card; and
* In March 2020, right before the pandemic hit in full swing, your Department of Education released a document providing guidance to schools on how to incorporate AP into the state’s CTE pathways.

In short, many good things have occurred, but funding for AP Exams was a missing piece that is now in place. Why does this matter? Kentucky has experienced declines in AP Exam participation and performance since 2018. This is a tide we’d like to change, and this funding can help.

A recent survey conducted by the College Board indicates that 58% of students who weren’t considering AP would be more likely to do so if the exam were paid for.  This percentage increases to 65% for Black students and to 66% for Hispanic Latino students.

In addition, the Center for American Progress released a report in June listing a number of strategies that districts and states are employing to improve participation in advanced coursework and paying for exams is one of them (page 2). In fact, this report calls out the good work of Advance Kentucky and references its collaboration with Glasgow Middle School and its efforts with vertical alignment ensuring its middle and high school teachers are working together. The report also acknowledges Henry Clay High School in Lexington for its success in mentoring and recruiting students across the board. In short, good things are happening here, and we appreciate that you’re adding to it.

Based on how the fiscal year falls, students will enjoy this financial support during the May 2022 AP Exam administration, so I don’t have any outcomes to share with you now, but we look forward to working with KDE in communicating this new support as well as seeing its impact on student participation.

Finally, I will share that paying for AP Exams should help with participation, but teacher professional development is the key for improving student performance, and we hope that the state makes that a priority as well in next year’s budget, as the two pieces go hand in hand.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. Again, we appreciate the General Assembly’s support for its AP students and teachers. Thank you for listening, for caring and for responding.