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40 East Adams Street  
Suite 110  
Jacksonville, FL 32202

June 4, 2026

Jacksonville City Council  
117 W. Duval Street  
Jacksonville, FL

Dear Honorable Members of the Jacksonville City Council,

On behalf of the Jacksonville Public Education Fund (JPEF), I am writing to express our support for advancing a ballot measure that would give Duval County voters the opportunity to decide whether to renew the 1-mill property tax that helps provide competitive compensation for teachers and additional funding for arts and athletics in our public schools.

As you consider this important matter, I wanted to share what JPEF's research has shown about the importance of investing in high-quality educators and why voters should be given the opportunity to vote to decide whether to continue supporting the resources that help Duval County students, teachers and schools thrive.

The Jacksonville Public Education Fund is Jacksonville's independent partner for quality public education. We support educators, use research to guide action, and bring the community together so every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Research consistently shows that high-quality teachers are the most important in-school factor influencing student success. JPEF's own research over the years has found that low compensation is one of the top reasons Duval County teachers consider leaving the classroom, and one of the top barriers discouraging college students from entering the teaching profession.

When voters approved the 1-mill referendum in 2022, Duval County Public Schools was facing its worst teacher shortage in five years, with more than 400 teacher vacancies. Since the passage of the referendum, the district has been better positioned to compete with neighboring counties for teaching talent and retaining the highly qualified educators who are essential to student achievement.

The progress in Duval County schools is clear. Duval County Public Schools earned its first-ever "A" rating from the state in 2025. The districtwide graduation rate reached 94.3%, including traditional and charter public schools. These gains reflect the hard work of students, families, school leaders, and especially the dedicated teachers who choose to serve in Duval County.

To continue this progress, Duval County must remain competitive with surrounding counties that are also investing in teacher compensation and public education. For that reason, JPEF supports advancing the renewal of the 1-mill property tax so voters can decide this critical issue for our schools, teachers, and students.

Strong public schools with quality teachers are also essential to Jacksonville's economic future. Businesses looking to relocate or expand consider the quality of local schools when deciding where to invest. Families consider the strength of public education when choosing where to live and work. And students who graduate prepared for college, careers, and civic life become the workforce that drives long-term economic growth. Investing in education is not separate from economic development. It is one of the most important economic development strategies a city can pursue.

This is not a new tax. It would allow voters to decide whether to continue the current 1-mill funding that supports competitive teacher compensation.

Thank you for your service to our city and for your consideration of this matter. We hope these findings are useful to you in providing Duval County voters the opportunity to weigh in on this important investment in public education.

Sincerely,



**Rachael Tutwiler Fortune**  
President, Jacksonville Public Education Fund

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