**African Christian Democratic Party**

 **19 May 2022

ACDP Parliament
Budget Vote 16: Basic Education
Speech by Marie Sukers MP**

**ACDP calls on DBE and Umalusi to cut red tape and subsidise independent, special needs, and low-fee schools**

“Honourable Chairperson,

I want to thank the Minister and congratulate the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) and some of the Provincial Education Departments for beginning to work with home educators to conduct research into home education. Home educators have contacted me to tell me about this positive development.

Research is essential to innovation and having only R5.5m and seven staff allocated for research, which were the figures given to me in the Committee, is insufficient to provide guidance to a department with a budget of over R25 billion. It is a strategic weakness to have to rely on academics outside of the department for research, as these academics quite understandably have their own research interest that are not necessarily the areas on which the department needs to conduct research.

Urgent research is needed into rural education. The closure of rural schools represents a significant waste of the historical capital expenditure of the department. We have no guarantee that the current capital expenditures will not also be wasted. Innovative solutions need to be developed with rural communities to save rural schools and to stop this waste of taxpayers’ money.

In his SONA President Cyril Ramaphosa called for efforts to revive the economy and to cut red tape. This budget doesn’t treat the education sector as one that can make a significant contribution to the economy. South Africa is well positioned to provide educational services to the rest of Africa, and beyond. We are once again struggling with loadshedding. Education services do not require large amounts of energy. Why are we not encouraging this sector?

Not only are we not encouraging educational entrepreneurship, but we are also actively discouraging it through excessive red tape. It takes years for independent schools to obtain registration and there is a significant degree of duplication between the registration requirements of the provincial education departments and Umalusi. The President spoke eloquently of the need to encourage small entrepreneurs by cutting red tape. I am calling on Umalusi, the DBE and the Provincial Education Departments to cut registration red tape for independent educational institutions. Umalusi needs to provide a 100% rebate on fees for all educational institutions with less than 30 students, and all institutions catering to learners with special educational needs, as well as all low-fee independent schools. Our Constitution makes clear in S29 (4) that the state is not precluded from subsidising independent educational institutions.

Chairperson, the state must start looking at innovative solutions that involves all sectors of society if we are to ever overcome the challenges faced by this sector.

I thank you.”