

*Immediate Release*

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(Charleston, WV) Protect West Virginia, a coalition of citizens and organizations who oppose further harmful budget cuts and who want to connect West Virginia values to the state's budget priorities, kicked off its campaign today.

Lauren Groseclose, Sarah Starks, and Alexandra Gallo, like many West Virginians, are already feeling the effects of year-after-year cuts to vital services. The three coalition members shared their story and asked lawmakers to come up with budget solutions that do not make cuts to services like education, public safety and state forests and parks.

Groseclose, a native West Virginian, hopes to continue to work as an educator in West Virginia but wonders if she will have a job next week or what the future looks like for herself and her students. Groseclose works in Kanawha County where more than 70 personnel cuts are being made. "This feel like an attack on education," Groseclose said. "Our students desperately need these resources."

Starks, a new mom and PROMISE scholarship recipient, wonders if her six-day-old daughter will grow up with the same opportunities as she did if they stay in West Virginia. She worries that declining funding and rising tuition costs are pushing higher education goals out-of-reach for too many in West Virginia.

Gallo, a West Virginia transplant, believes the state's natural beauty brings people here and we need to invest in our state parks and forests for our own people and for tourism opportunities. "We won't win by demanding less," Gallo said. "If we give up, we lose."

Over the last 10 years, corporations were given more than half a million dollars in tax breaks while job growth stagnated in the state. Legislators must explore more balanced options moving forward, including revenue-generating measures that invest in our people.

Coalition members welcomed other across the Mountain State to visit [www.protectwv.org](http://www.protectwv.org) to sign on to the campaign and take action.