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Media Contact: **Johnnie Aycock**
Alabama Literacy Alliance
(205) 242-5930 -- johnnie@strategic101.com

Statewide Consortium Launches New Literacy Alliance; Announces Summit

MONTGOMERY, AL – A consortium of more than a dozen nonprofit organizations and state agencies and departments has announced the creation of the Alabama Literacy Alliance and plans to convene public and private stakeholders together for an inaugural statewide literacy Summit on May 11, 2012.

The summit, themed ‘Literacy: an Economic and Education Challenge for Alabama,’ will be held at the Renaissance Montgomery from 10:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. on May 11. Attendance is free but reservations are required at www.literacy-council.org. More than 75 literacy stakeholders are anticipated to attend.

Nationally-recognized literacy expert Margaret Doughty and University of Alabama Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility Director Stephen Black will keynote the half-day Summit. Doughty is founder and CEO of Literacy Powerline, a consulting firm specializing in working with states and communities to develop cross-sector consortiums aimed at addressing literacy issues. Black founded Impact Alabama, a Birmingham-based nonprofit providing a wide variety of education, health and financial literacy services to hundreds of thousands of children and families annually.

“Literacy is a key building block to Alabama’s economic, educational and community success,” said Beth Wilder, president and CEO of The Literacy Council, serving five counties in Central Alabama.

“Functionally illiterate adults account for 15 percent of the total population. The need for a statewide consortium, working across industry lines and coordinating the delivery of training services, is immense. This Alliance is bringing all sectors together for the first time to put a solid stamp on the need for improving the delivery of literacy training throughout Alabama,” Wilder said.

The vision of the Alabama Literacy Alliance is to build a state where all citizens reach their optimal literacy potential. The Alliance’s mission is to foster communications and partnerships throughout Alabama to advocate, coordinate, promote and support the effective delivery of literacy services to build a productive, literate workforce. The Alliance was formed after several months of meetings between organizations including state agencies, local literacy councils, community stakeholders and nonprofits.

“There has never been a consortium of this caliber put together to address Alabama’s literacy challenges,” said Alliance Coordinator Johnnie Aycock of Tuscaloosa. “Learning to read is really a cornerstone for success in all areas from education and economic development to healthcare and high-tech industry,” Aycock said.

“The Department of Education is proud to be a part of this Alliance at what really is a critical time for our state’s literacy network. Learning to read is the cornerstone of educational success and spreading best practices through an integrated system ensures that today’s students have access to the very best tools to make them lifelong learners,” said Judy Stone, program coordinator of the Alabama Reading Initiative.

Contact Alliance Coordinator Johnnie Aycock at (205) 242-5930 for more information.