

For Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania’s Basic Education Funding Commission is “Incomplete” with its Assignment for a New School Funding Formula

COLLEGEVILLE, PA (October 16th, 2014) – Every school district in Montgomery County has less state funding for education this year than it did in 2011- the year Pennsylvania stopped using an adequate and predictable formula to fund its schools. The Pennsylvania State Legislature created the Basic Education Funding Commission in June to develop and recommend a new formula for funding schools based on several factors including relative wealth of school districts, local tax effort and student enrollment. The Commission however is not required by state law to determine the actual costs of providing children with a high-quality education.

At Thursday’s hearing at Perkiomen Valley High School in Collegeville, parents and teachers organized by Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) and the nonpartisan, faith-based organization POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild) joined together to bear witness to the public hearing and urge the Commission to consider the actual costs of education when crafting its recommendations.

Donna Cooper, Executive Director of PCCY noted that school districts located near the site of Thursday’s hearing including Perkiomen Valley, Methacton, Pottstown, Pottsgrove, Norristown, Souderton and Spring-Ford have raised property taxes every year for the last four years to make up for insufficient funding from the state.

“Ironically the very school district hosting this hearing has suffered from cuts to programs and rising property taxes. Only by crafting a fair funding formula based on the real costs of education can we create a predictable and viable way to fund our schools,” Cooper said.

The fact-finding Commission makes its hearings open for the public to attend, but testifying at the hearing is by invitation only. Faith-based leaders believe that for hearings to truly be “public,” parents and teachers should have the right to testify directly to the Commission about the harm underfunding has caused their children and their schools.

"I am seeing how inequities in school funding are leading to my child and his peers not getting the resources or attention they need to thrive in their education," said Rev. Dwayne Mosier, a parent in Norristown Area School District and a pastor at Reformed Church of the Ascension. "Public education should not be a lottery in which children can get lucky - or not - depending on the zip code they are born in. My kids, and everyone's kids, deserve an excellent education regardless of where they live. It's my duty as a person of faith and a parent to make that message public."

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