

May 26, 2015

Dear [Representative/Senator]:

We are writing to you on behalf of the parents, students and community members we serve across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to ask for your support to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities.

**We strongly support the Governor's proposal for \$100 million in additional special education funding driven out through the special education formula adopted last year.** As you know, funding for special education had been flat-funded for six years until last year's modest increase. School districts desperately need new special education dollars to support their students. A 2009 study showed that there was a \$380 million funding gap for special education. Last year's \$20 million and this year's proposed \$100 million would be a step towards closing that gap. Our children need your support now.

We urge you to support this proposal for the nearly 270,000 students with disabilities across Pennsylvania. Children with disabilities cannot afford to wait and we cannot prolong the reductions in special education budgets that have already resulted in cuts to teaching staff, an increase in learning support teacher caseloads, and massive cuts to critical resources and services that our children need to learn.

In addition, we support the Governor's proposal to change how cyber charter schools receive funding for special education. By requiring that cyber charter schools receive funding based on the same model used to distribute funding to school districts (three tiers of funding based on severity of disability), this plan ensures that actual student need and cost drive the accurate and fair distribution of resources. We hope the General Assembly will revisit the recommendations made by the 2014 bi-partisan Special Education Funding Commission. All public schools serving children with disabilities, including brick and mortar charter schools, should receive tiered funding based on the needs of their students.

Both additional resources and the equitable distribution of resources are needed to ensure that students with disabilities in all public schools receive the appropriate supports and services they desperately need to be successful in school and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Gordon Klehr  
Interim Executive Director  
**Education Law Center**  
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**The Arc of Pennsylvania**

Maureen Cronin, Executive Director

**The Arc of Northeastern PA**

Ms. Jeannie Lally, Director, Advocacy Services

**The Arc of Philadelphia**

Tanya Regli, Executive Director

**A Day in Our Shoes**

Lisa Lightner

**Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania**

Peri Jude Radecic, Chief Executive Officer

**Education Voters of Pennsylvania**

Susan Gobreski, Executive Director

**The Local Task Force on the Right to Education IU2**

Pam Harbin and Cheryl Dennis, Co-Chairs

**Mental Health Association of Southeastern PA (MHASP)**

**Family Mentor and Advocacy Network (formerly Parents Involved Network (PIN))**

Lisa Snitzer, Division Director

**Parent Power**

Cecelia Thompson, Chairperson - Special Education

**Pennsylvania's Education for All Coalition (PEAC)**

Diane Perry, Past President, Board Member

**PEAL Center**

Elisabeth T. Healey, Executive Director

**Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children**

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**Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia**

Jennifer Clarke, Executive Director

**Public Citizens for Children and Youth**

Donna Cooper, Executive Director

**Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA)**

Richard S. Edley, President/CEO

**Vision for Equality, Inc.**

Maureen Devaney and Audrey Coccia, Co-Executive Directors