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Leading Education Organizations Declare Victory on Funding Formula And Call for Formula to be Adequately Funded

Groups Announce a New Push to End School Funding Gap

PHILADELPHIA (April 27, 2016) – The region’s leading education organizations gathered on the steps of the Philadelphia School District to applaud the state’s enactment of a new school funding formula and to call for a much more substantial increase in investments in education in next year’s state budget.

The new bipartisan formula follows the recommendations made by the Campaign for Fair Education Funding, which advocated for a formula that would allocate new state funds based on the number of student in each district *and* weighted on student and district factors, such as the number of students who are low income, English Language Learners, or newly enrolled in charter schools, as well as the extent of the local tax effort and local tax capacity. Last week the state enacted a formula to allocate new money in this year’s basic education funding budget that uses this formula. (A full explanation of the formula can be found here:

<http://fairfundingpa.org/resources/a-fair-funding-formula/>)

The groups also announced a new push to flex the muscle of the formula by increasing the state funds for education in the next school year. Districts across the region, including Philadelphia, are still suffering the loss of state aid from cuts made during the Corbett Administration. A substantial increase in funds allocated via the formula can help fill those gaps and enable districts to reinstate critical academic programs and make deferred purchases of basic educational materials.

The group announced that school parents and advocates will be in Harrisburg on Monday, May 2nd to make the case for \$400 million in new funding for basic education for the 2016-2017 state budget to begin to address historic inequities in Pennsylvania’s school-funding system. The Campaign for Fair Education Funding Rally, scheduled for the first legislative session day after the Primary Election, is also expected to drive home the need to pass a budget on time.

“Our schools, parents and students cannot go through another underfunded and unpredictable school year,” said Marc Stier of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center.

Gathered on the steps of the Philadelphia School District after a two-year campaign to persuade the legislature and governor to enact a fair school funding formula, Deborah Gordon Klehr of the Education Law Center said, “After five years without a fair funding formula, a powerful statewide coalition and these groups represented here today built the bi-partisan support for a groundbreaking formula to finally become law. Yet our work is not done. We must also address the needs of poor school districts, like Philadelphia, that were disproportionately impacted by previous budget cuts and avoid locking in those cuts in the state budget.”

We are pleased that the era of backroom deals that delivered new school funding to schools with politically powerful members of the legislature has ended,” said Susan Spicka of Education Voters. “Now, as new funds are put on the table, each district will receive its share of new state funding based on the needs of its students and the efforts of local taxpayers.

“Our powerful statewide coalition has a demonstrated track record of success, and we agree that we must now get the legislature to fund the formula so that we finally end the curse of a child’s zip code determining the public education quality in Pennsylvania. We succeeded once and we will succeed again.” said Donna Cooper of Public Citizens for Children and Youth.

Michael Churchill of the Public Interest Law Center said, “Let’s be clear, most districts in the state still have not been made whole from the 2011 cuts. We looked at how the districts plan to use new state funds and it’s pretty simple, these funds will make it possible for them to buy books that make sure our students learn to the state standards and restore or expand full day kindergarten. Districts heavily dependent on state funds are hurting and with \$400 million on the table they will start to rebuild the very basics that are essential to improving student outcomes.”

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