

## **PRESS RELEASE FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FUNDING CAMPAIGN**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Ron Cowell  
The Education Policy and Leadership Center  
412-298-4796  
[cowell@eplc.org](mailto:cowell@eplc.org)

### **STATE EDUCATION BUDGET PROMISES MORE BURDEN FOR LOCAL TAXPAYERS AND CUTS FOR STUDENTS**

***Budget proposal ignores need to create high quality learning opportunities for  
all of PA's children***

HARRISBURG-(February 7, 2012)-Members of the Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign (PSFC) expressed disappointment today about Governor Corbett's budget message and its implications for public education. On the heels of the 2011-2012 budget, which cut nearly \$1 billion from public schools, this year's budget continues to shift the school funding burden to school districts and local taxpayers.

The governor's proposed budget continues to cut state funding for education. The Accountability Block Grant (\$100 million), which many districts use for early childhood education, is eliminated and a separate line item for early education funding is reduced. In addition, there are no increases for basic subsidy and special education in a year when school districts are facing substantial, mandated increases in local pension contributions. This will inevitably mean districts must either cut programs further or raise local taxes more.

"Pennsylvanians do not support the major education cuts made this past year and believe that state government has a responsibility to assure quality learning opportunities for all students, so it is vital that the 2012-2013 state budget acknowledge this state responsibility and the needs of Pennsylvania's students," said Ron Cowell, president of The Education Policy Leadership Center. "If the budget is approved as proposed by the Governor, the devastating effects of the recent budget will continue, local taxpayers will be asked to shoulder more school funding responsibility, and our children will have fewer learning opportunities.

Rather than more cuts for programs that give students an opportunity to learn, PSFC believes that the 2012-2013 budget must restore the devastating cuts made last year, particularly the \$250 million Accountability Block Grant and \$225 million Charter School Reimbursement line-items. In addition, the Campaign is asking the Legislature to make minimal cost-of-living increases to the basic education subsidy, special education and career-technical education. Without this crucial funding, this year's budget will further threaten educational programs that support improved academic achievement and prepare all children for a successful future.

"Pennsylvania took a huge step back last year, with larger class sizes, fewer full-day kindergarten opportunities, less tutoring, fewer foreign languages and AP courses in high school, and the elimination of summer school," said Jim Buckheit, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators. "The cuts in funding for public education this year had the greatest impact on the less wealthy districts across the state, but we already know that practically all districts - even the more

wealthy - are discussing significant cuts for next school year in academic programs and learning opportunities for students."

There is a difference in per pupil costs of more than \$15,000 per year between the lowest spending district (Valley View) and the highest spending district (Lower Merion), a gap that most find to be indefensible, but one that is supported by state policy. The disparity occurs because Pennsylvania's K-12 funding system, with its relatively low state spending on education, is disproportionately dependent upon the local wealth in a community. Among the 50 states, Pennsylvania ranks in the bottom 10 on the share of K-12 costs paid for by state government. The Pennsylvania Legislature appropriates almost \$500 per student per year less than the national average, and state government's education spending per student is less than in all of our surrounding states.

"Public education is a fundamental responsibility of state government, and state lawmakers have a responsibility in both good and tough economic times to support a funding system that is fair and assures high quality learning opportunities for every student, regardless of the wealth of the community in which they live," said Julie Lesitsky, president of Pennsylvania PTA.

#### **About the Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign**

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign is an unprecedented coalition of more than 30 statewide and regional education and advocacy organizations representing hundreds of thousands of parents, students, educators, school board members, administrators, and other concerned citizens advocating for adequate and equitable funding of Pennsylvania's public schools.

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