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Contact: Barbara Macholz Grimaldi, 267.546.1304, [bgrimaldi@pilcop.org](mailto:bgrimaldi@pilcop.org)

**Philadelphia parents' lawsuit challenges failure of Pennsylvania Department of Education**  
PDE neglects to investigate hundreds of allegations documenting severe effects of underfunding

Philadelphia, Pa. – Today seven Philadelphia School District parents and Parents United for Public Education file a lawsuit in the Commonwealth Court alleging that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has violated its legal obligation to investigate allegations of massive curriculum deficiencies in Philadelphia public schools. These plaintiffs are represented by the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (Law Center).

In September 2013, Philadelphia schools began operating on what District officials themselves described as a “Doomsday Budget.” Soon after, the Law Center, Parents United, and the Media Mobilizing Project launched [myphillyschools.com](http://myphillyschools.com). Through this online portal and through paper filings, Philadelphia parents have submitted over 825 complaints to PDE documenting dire school conditions. PDE, which has governed Philadelphia public schools since 2001, is required to investigate these formal complaints. But after one year, the vast majority of parents have received only a generic form letter or no response at all.

Problems alleged by parents include alarming levels of overcrowding such that teachers can no longer walk between desks to interact with individual students; increasingly limited curricular offerings; a distressing lack of counselors; and squalid and insufficient toilet facilities.

Tim Allen, a parent involved in the lawsuit, hopes the court will force PDE to investigate the crisis conditions found in schools like his son's, the William Bodine High School for International Affairs. “I want my son, and all kids in the city of Philadelphia, to have equal access to a really good education that they can use to get into college,” Allen said. “Teachers and counselors are trying their hardest with the limited resources they have, but if the state will not investigate what is going on in city schools, Philadelphia's kids will continue to suffer.”

“The breadth of complaints we've received prove that the state must investigate the quality of education in the School District of Philadelphia,” said Helen Gym of Parents United. “It is simply unacceptable for the state to ignore the claims of hundreds of parents representing 40 percent of District schools. We encourage parents to continue to make their voices heard and document issues in schools by submitting complaints through [myphillyschools.com](http://myphillyschools.com).”

“The State must be held accountable for its failure to address these allegations,” said Ben Geffen, Law Center staff attorney and counsel for the plaintiffs. “Secretary Dumaesq must know that responding to parents' pleas with form letters and silence not only violates the trust of parents, but is also a clear violation of her department's legal duties.”

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NB: Press should note this case is distinct from the Law Center's statewide lawsuit regarding education funding, which is forthcoming.

Parents United for Public Education is a citywide parent-led organization focused on building an independent voice for parents, supporting quality and equity in school budgets, and ensuring that every child gets the resources they need in their local schools. Learn more at [www.parentsunitedphila.com](http://www.parentsunitedphila.com).

The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia uses high-impact legal strategies to improve the well-being and life prospects of the region's most vulnerable populations by securing access to six deeply intertwined resources – a high-quality public education, access to healthcare, employment, housing, healthy neighborhoods, and the right to vote. Learn more at [www.pilcop.org](http://www.pilcop.org) or on Twitter @PILCOP1969.