



October 21, 2015

To the Governor and Members of the General Assembly:

We, the undersigned organizations and community leaders from across Pennsylvania, urge you to keep the needs of Pennsylvania's school students at the forefront by promptly coming to a budget agreement that enacts the funding formula adopted by the state Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC) and invests significant new dollars in our public schools.

Since the budget impasse began more than 100 days ago, the state has missed three significant payments to our public schools, with another large payment due in just eight days. The state will be behind by more than \$3 billion by then, and school districts already have been forced to borrow funds, delay payments to vendors, or suspend tuition payments to charter schools in order to meet payroll and keep the doors open.

As we go further into the school year without a state budget, their cash flow problems will only intensify, forcing even more drastic measures that will undermine the academic progress of our children.

While it is important for all sides to reach agreement right away to avert such actions, our children and our communities deserve a state budget that invests fairly and fully in public education.

We recognize that many important issues must be resolved to reach agreement on a budget, but failure to sufficiently fund our public schools and to correct the glaring disparities in the way public education is funded will shortchange our children and continue to hold back our state's economy.

Our organizations, which include the membership of the nonpartisan *Campaign for Fair Education Funding*, are as diverse as the constituents you and your colleagues represent, yet we have come together in agreement that all of Pennsylvania's students – no matter where they live – deserve an opportunity to meet state academic standards and to be prepared for success in college or a career. That can only be achieved through sufficient, sustainable, predictable, and long-term investment in our public schools.

Pennsylvania has the widest funding gap between wealthy and poor school districts of any state in the country. We are one of only three states without a school funding formula. With your leadership, Pennsylvania can shift from being a case study in unpredictable and inequitable public school funding to setting the standard for delivering fair funding that meets the needs of every child.

In June, the BEFC, unanimously and in a bipartisan way, developed a new funding formula to help Pennsylvania make the transition to fair and predictable funding. We urge you to act in a similar bipartisan fashion to enact that formula with a final budget package. We further urge that you pass a

budget that increases basic education funding by at least \$410 million to help schools recover from the impact of lower revenues in recent years and to begin implementing the formula. Failure to do so will only continue the cycle of program cuts and staff reductions that have occurred at many schools in recent years.

We know that you and all Pennsylvania lawmakers want the brightest future possible for every child in the state. Please move quickly to resolve your differences and make our children a top priority in any agreement so that this long-delayed budget is worth the wait for them.

Sincerely,

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