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State Rep. Ronald Waters
D-Delaware/Phila.

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Pa. Legislative Black Caucus denounces Republican assault on education

HARRISBURG, May 18 – State Rep. Ronald G. Waters, D-Phila./Delaware, chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus; Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown, PLBC vice chairwoman; state Sen. Shirley Kitchen, D-Phila., Democratic Public Health and Welfare Committee chairwoman; Rep. James Roebuck, Democratic chairman, House Education Committee; and Sen. Vincent Hughes, Democratic chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee, released the following statement on the effects of the Republican budget cuts to public education. These cuts will primarily target and further set back disadvantaged, African-American and Latino children:

"As members of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, we have grave concerns about the cuts to basic education that Governor Corbett and the House Republicans have proposed for the 2011-2012 budget.

"Our position is clear – we stand firmly in opposition to these cuts, which would be a detriment to our children and our future, and set back underprivileged children in this Commonwealth for years to come.

"There is no question that school districts throughout the Commonwealth will be hurt if we fail to invest in our children's futures. What's more, neither of these budget proposals, either the governor's or the House Republicans', would distribute the pain evenly throughout Pennsylvania. Rather, low-income students and students of color would suffer disproportionately.

"These proposed budget cuts eliminate our state's recent efforts to provide adequate and equitable funding for all our students to meet higher academic standards. If school districts are going to be held accountable for educating all our children to higher academic standards then we must provide adequate and equitable resources so all our students have the opportunity to meet these higher academic standards.

"According to a data analysis compiled by the PA School Funding Campaign, the governor's budget would cut education spending, on average, by \$819 for a low income student, by \$867 for an Hispanic student and \$1,091 for a black student. The typical Caucasian student would experience only a \$493 cut. Statewide, the average cut would be \$623 per student.

"The PLBC believes that this analysis is the missing link, the untold story in the Republican assault on education. The Republicans would make the most vulnerable among us -- poor children and children of color -- bear the brunt of these disastrous cuts to our schools. This is not an example of shared sacrifice, as Governor Corbett touted in his budget address. This is an example of bait and switch, as some children will be forced to sacrifice more than others. The leaders of the commonwealth have a responsibility to provide an opportunity to learn to all children; disproportionate cuts are antithetical to democracy and decency.

"The disparities under the GOP House budget are just as glaring, although the average cut would be a little less, at \$509 per student. The typical low-income student would experience a \$715 cut. The spending reductions would be \$781 for an Hispanic student and \$1,018 for an African-American student compared to \$385 for a white student.

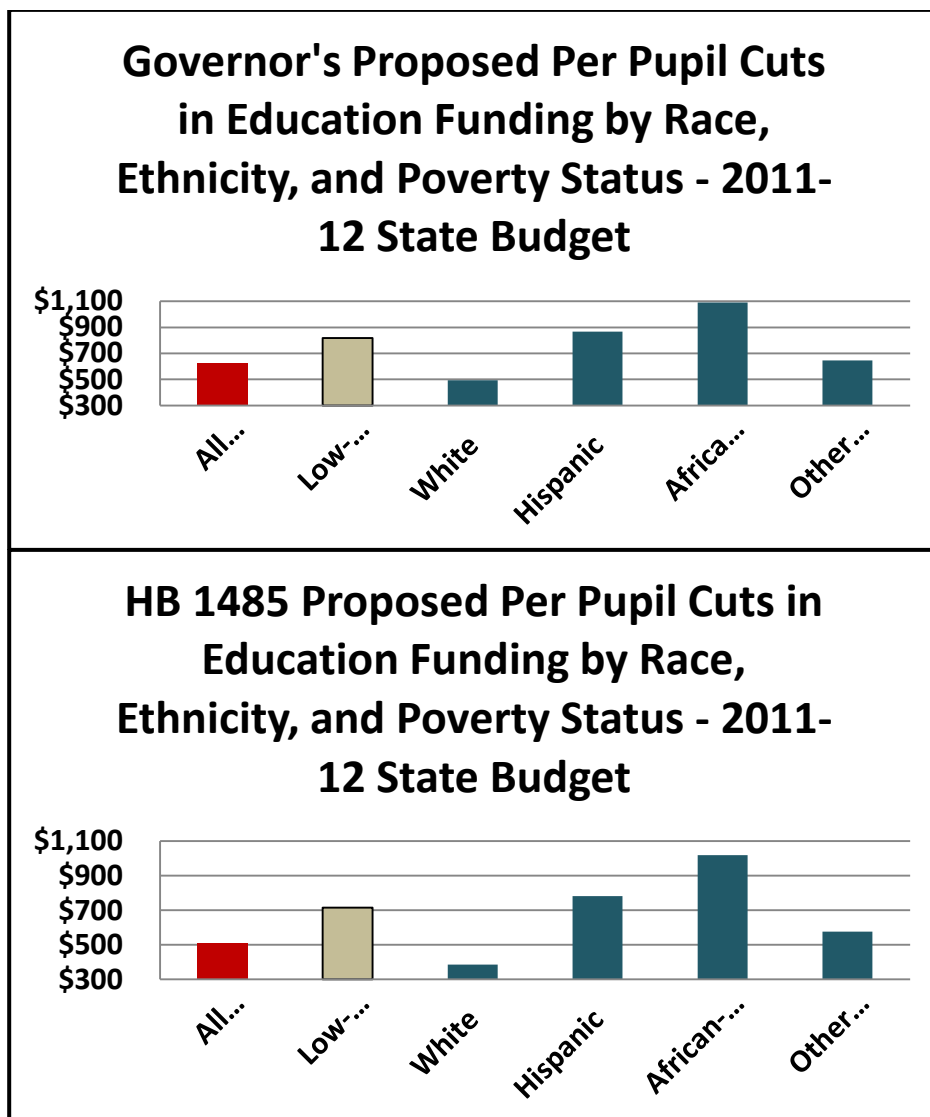
"It is no wonder that Pennsylvanians are emphatically against cuts to education, and rate education as the issue of greatest importance to them. If we allow the governor's proposal or the House Republican proposal to go forward, we are sending the wrong message to our children. We are telling them that we do not

believe in equal access to a high-quality education. We are telling them that if you are of a certain ethnic background or color, or were born into an underprivileged family, you will sacrifice the most.

"Public education was not supposed to be this way. State funding for education is designed to level the playing field, and bring less harm to those who need the greatest help. We should not impose more suffering on those children who are least able to bear it."

Rep. Ronald G. Waters, chairman, Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus
Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown, vice chairwoman, Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus
Rep. James Roebuck, Democratic chairman, House Education Committee
Sen. Vincent Hughes, Democratic chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
Sen. Shirley Kitchen, Democratic Public Health and Welfare Committee chairwoman
Members of the PLBC

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