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EPLC Statement on Governor's Proposed Education Budget

Harrisburg (February 4, 2009) — Governor Rendell's proposed increase of \$300 million for basic subsidies to school districts for 2009-2010 has garnered support from advocates for Pennsylvania school funding reform who feared a much smaller proposal might come from the Governor in the midst of the severe state and national recession. "Governor Rendell should be applauded for not backing down on his commitment to fix Pennsylvania's unfair school funding system," said Ronald Cowell, president of The Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC), based in Harrisburg.

While the second year of the 6-year plan adopted by the Legislature in 2008 would require an increase of \$430 million, the serious revenue shortfalls facing Pennsylvania this year and next threatened to stall progress or even reverse the important gains made last year.

Cowell said that the Governor's basic subsidy increase and faithfulness to the new funding formula which is linked to the state's 2007 Costing-Out Study will help to ensure that Pennsylvania stays on track to eliminate the school resource gaps that deny children in many districts a fair opportunity for academic success.

Cowell also praised the governor's proposal to increase PHEAA grants and to create a new Tuition Relief program for students attending community colleges and the 14 state-owned universities. "On any national scale, Pennsylvania is ranked as a high-tuition state for our public colleges and universities, and the Governor's student assistance proposals will go a long way to making higher education more affordable for a large number of Pennsylvania families," Cowell said.

"In these difficult economic times, it is significant that Governor Rendell has asked the Legislature and Pennsylvania taxpayers to continue to make important investments in the intellectual infrastructure of this state," Cowell added. "These investments must continue to be a vital part of Pennsylvania's plan for economic recovery and long-term success."

The Education Policy and Leadership Center is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to improve the development and implementation of state-level education policy. More information about EPLC can be found at www.eplc.org.