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**Observations  
Governor Corbett's  
2013-14 State Budget Proposal**

I would like to start by reviewing the fiscal situation that currently faces school districts in the 2012-13 school year and also remind you these cuts follow even deeper cuts made in 2011-12.

- 6 school districts reduced or eliminated full-day kindergarten
- 51 percent of districts increased class size
- 43 percent reduced elective course offerings such as those offered in world languages, arts, music, physical education, etc.
- 32 percent reduced or eliminated program that provide extra help to struggling students
- 42 percent delayed textbook purchases
- 21 percent eliminated summer school programs
- 43 percent reduced or eliminated student field trips
- 30 percent reduced/eliminated extra-curricular activities or increased fees for students to participate in extracurricular activities
- 20 percent delayed building or renovating school buildings
- 38 percent delayed building capital maintenance projects
- 7 percent closed school buildings
- 30 percent furloughed staff-half of the furloughed staff are teachers
- 70 percent of districts using reserves to balance their budgets
- 64 percent of districts increased local property taxes
- Chester-Upland and Dusquesne placed into financial recovery status
- Harrisburg and York designated as Financial Watch School Districts

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, Governor Corbett released his budget proposal for 2013-14.

- His budget proposal contains a \$90 million increase in basic education funding, \$11.4 million total combined increase for Pre-K counts, Head Start and Early Intervention and \$138 million in savings to school districts from reduced payments to PSERS. These increases are dependent upon enactment of pension reforms proposed by the Governor.
- His budget also contains a proposal to privatize the State Store System and to use the \$1.0 billion in proceeds of the sale to provide a Passport to Learning block grant to school districts over four years beginning in 2014-15.

While we support use of any proceeds from privatization of the state store system to support education the proceeds will not help districts avoid additional cuts in 2014-15.

Pension reforms hurt current and future state and school employees while providing only short-term relief to school districts and the state by compressing and lengthening the use of collars. These short term savings are achieved in exchange for a far longer period of extraordinary high payments by districts to PSERS. The \$90 million in new funding and \$138 million in pension savings, while helpful, will have limited impact on reducing further significant cuts to instructional programming and staff in 2013-14.

In addition to the appropriations and two major proposals, Governor Corbett proposed several initiatives. They include:

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- A proposal to divert 1% of special education funding from districts and IUs to increase the Special Education Contingency fund from one to two percent of the state appropriation. Contingency funds are used to help districts defray educational and support service costs of students with multiple disabilities who require very high cost services.
- Once again, as in previous budgets, the Governor proposes to provide mandate relief to school districts.
- The budget also outlines a competency-based learning initiative that would assist school districts in moving from measuring student success through measurement of seat-time to measurement based upon student demonstration of achievement of academic content.
- Finally, the budget includes an initiative that would have the Department provide Digital Learning Opportunities to districts that would allow students to attain district course requirements through on-line learning.

The Governor's budget is a plan that includes several bold proposals that will dramatically change public school and state pensions, state store system and transportation funding. But making public school funding, a core function of state government, dependent upon adoption of these proposals does nothing to help schools discontinue the downward spiral of reduced instructional programming and staffing cuts that result in reduced educational opportunities available to students across the state.

The state needs to demonstrate its commitment to public education—and its children—by providing adequate and equitable funding to its public schools.