

Statewide Education Leaders Call on the Legislature to Address School Funding Reform in the Special Session

NEWS RELEASE - Wednesday, September 4, 2002

(Harrisburg) -- As the 38th Special Session of the Pennsylvania Legislature opened to address property taxes, education leaders rallied to highlight the need for school funding reform to be addressed in tandem with any moves to change local tax structures.

In a strong demonstration of unity, leaders of thirteen education advocacy, policy and professional associations and prominent clergy called on the legislature to address school funding reform in tandem with any efforts to change Pennsylvania's tax structure. These groups represent important statewide constituencies. The School Boards Association, Pennsylvania PTA, Pennsylvania Council of Churches and Good Schools Pennsylvania combined have the capacity to mobilize tens of thousands of advocates for school funding reform. To demonstrate the breadth of this base, citizens representing a majority of the legislators' districts in the General Assembly joined in the call for school funding reform.

Ron Cowell, the Chair of the Pennsylvania School Finance Reform Group and President of the Education Policy and Leadership Center said, "Local property tax reform is a critical issue because it is currently the major source of funding for public education, but it is unfair to local taxpayers and unfair to children." The thirteen groups recommend a three point plan to ensure fairness to children and taxpayers:

Beginning a new era of funding for public education where the state pays the majority of the cost of public education, thereby decreasing reliance on local property taxes. Such a system would be fairer to taxpayers and for all students who rely on our public schools to offer a high quality education.

Creating a public school funding formula which budgets for success in every public school. This means using what we know makes successful schools and ensuring that all schools have the resources they need to achieve success with their students. Elements of success for all children will require that children who would benefit from pre-k, full-day kindergarten, smaller class size, tutoring, high quality instruction, safe facilities and increased support for parental and community involvement are afforded these services.

Providing schools, teacher and students with adequate support and then holding schools accountable for high standards of achievement for all children.

The thirteen organizations will keep their members abreast of the Special Session proceedings and urge regular contact with legislators to address the three point plan for school funding reform during the Special Session.

Pennsylvania School Finance Reform Group

Council for Public Education

Good Schools Pennsylvania

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PAARS)

Pennsylvania Association of School
Administrators

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Pennsylvania PTA

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Pennsylvania Public Education Partnership
(Lancaster Foundation for Educational
Enrichment, Mon Valley Education Consortium,
Philadelphia Education Fund and Pittsburgh
Council on Public Education)

Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Pennsylvania School Reform Network (PSRN)

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth
(PCCY)

The Education Policy and Leadership Center
(EPLC)