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**Education Advocates Applaud Proposed Commission
on Public School Finance**

Harrisburg, Pa. – Education advocates are encouraged that the soon-to-be released education costing-out study won't simply be shelved, as today State Representatives John Siptroth (D-189) and Beverly Mackereth (R-196) introduced a bi-partisan proposal to establish a Joint Legislative Commission on Public School Finance.

Under the Siptroth/Mackereth proposal, the 41-member joint commission composed of policymakers, business leaders, professional educators and parents, would be charged with examining the State Board of Education's statewide costing-out study and offering recommendations on badly needed reforms to Pennsylvania's current system of funding public education.

The proposal for a joint legislative commission comes in advance of the expected November 14 release of the statewide costing-out study. The study, mandated by the Legislature, will determine the programs and resources required for every school district to enable all students to meet Pennsylvania's academic standards.

“The costing-out study lays the groundwork for what is needed to enact real, systemic change,” said Janis Risch, executive director of Good Schools Pennsylvania, whose organization, along with the Education Law Center and the Education Policy and Leadership Center, are promoting a campaign to strengthen the way Pennsylvania funds public education. “But the study is just the first step. The appointment of a joint commission is one way to help guarantee that education finance reform efforts continue to gain momentum.”

Advocates stress that Governor Rendell and the Legislature have the responsibility to act quickly and boldly to implement the findings and recommendations of the costing-out study and to provide the resources needed to fully support Pennsylvania's students. “The joint commission should not be cause for delay in the Governor and the Legislature using

the 2008-09 budget as an immediate opportunity to make a firm commitment and significant progress to address the needs identified by the costing-out study,” said Ron Cowell, president of the Education Policy and Leadership Center.

“We expect that the work of the joint commission will result in a broadly supported recommendation for a new statewide funding system based on the principles of adequacy, accountability, efficiency, equity and predictability,” said Baruch Kintisch, staff attorney for the Education Law Center “A new funding plan needs to increase to 50% the state share of public education costs and eliminate the unfair inequities in educational opportunities available to students across 501 school districts.”

“Pennsylvania’s school funding system is one of the worst in the country and has long been in need of an overhaul and we applaud Representatives Siptroth and Mackereth and their colleagues for their leadership in taking another step in that process,” said Kintisch. “The General Assembly must act promptly to approve the joint resolution and put into place another important tool to help build an effective school funding system in Pennsylvania.”

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