

## **March 26, 2008: Philadelphia Museum of Art Hosts House Education Committee Hearing**

Community leaders, educators, administrators and students gathered at the Philadelphia Museum of Art to testify at the House Education Committee's budget hearing.

### **An administrator speaks out**

"I am not here today to convey concern about saving AYP," said Lou DeVlieger, assistant superintendent of Upper Darby School District, as he testified to legislators about the importance of a new school funding formula. "I am here to convey concern about saving the country."

As he discussed the importance of Governor Rendell's budget proposal for basic education, DeVlieger noted that Upper Darby is a federal resettlement area, with immigrants from 64 countries who speak more than 50 languages. Each year, the district receives 300 or more students who never before attended Upper Darby schools.

"Upper Darby borders Philadelphia and serves as a beacon of hope for families seeking better opportunities in schools for their students," he said.

As he closed his testimony, DeVlieger reiterated the importance of a sound school funding formula to creating successful schools, not just for students, but for the community and state as a whole. "Students will either make it as productive citizens or become a burden on taxpayers backs forever."

### **Students pin legislators for answers**

Also presenting compelling testimony were Candace Carter and Chuane Berry, high school students representing the Philadelphia Student Union and Youth United for Change. The young people made a great impression on the committee members, several of whom acknowledged that they had not been nearly so poised, so serious or so committed at the tender age of 16.

Still, the committee members underestimated the maturity and passion of the students; in a well-intentioned but patronizing way, they assured the young people that many great opportunities awaited them as long as they maintained their enthusiasm for education and made good choices.

"You talk about our education and tell us to make good life choices," countered Khalif Dobson, a sophomore at West Philadelphia High and a member of the Philadelphia Student Union, "but I feel like 'good life choices' are being taken away from us when our school doesn't have textbooks, or access to the advanced placement courses that will get us into college, or when our teachers are burned out from teaching crowded classes without enough resources."

"What we really want to know," followed Dan Jones, a sophomore at Masterman High School and also a member of the Philadelphia Student Union, "is whether you will support the governor's proposal to permanently fix the school funding formula?"