

PA EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM CAMPAIGN

The Education Policy and Leadership Center

Good Schools Pennsylvania

Education Law Center

For Immediate Release

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Education Advocates applaud House Education Committee for action; Encourage General Assembly to follow suit

Harrisburg, Pa. (December 12, 2007) – The House Education Committee took steps today to make the costing-out study count when it passed House Resolution 460, a proposal to create a Joint Legislative Commission on Public School Finance.

If adopted by the General Assembly, the 41-member joint legislative commission will be composed of members of the General Assembly, as well as education experts, parents and teachers, and will be charged with using the recently-released statewide education costing-out study to craft recommendations for reforming the state's education funding formula. The resolution would require that the commission report its recommendations within the year.

“The passage of House Resolution 460 today by the Education Committee ensures that the costing-out study won't simply sit on a shelf,” said Janis Risch, executive director of Good Schools Pennsylvania, whose organization, along with the Education Law Center and The Education Policy and Leadership Center, is promoting a campaign to strengthen the way Pennsylvania funds public education. “The creation and appointment of the joint commission will guarantee that education finance reform efforts continue to gain momentum.”

House Resolution 460 was introduced by State Representatives John Siptroth (D-189) and Beverly Mackereth (R-196) in October and received broad bi-partisan support in the General Assembly. Senator Pat Browne (R-Lehigh) introduced a similar proposal, Senate Resolution 210, in November.

Both proposals were introduced to address Pennsylvania's first costing-out study, commissioned by the General Assembly, and released by the State Board of Education on November 14.

The costing-out analysis found that \$11,926 is the average level of funding required to ensure that every student reaches state standards of academic achievement. The study identified a base cost per student of \$8,003 and the additional funding needed to close the achievement gap for students in poverty, English language learners and children with special needs. The base cost amount was also adjusted to further close the resource gap for districts that are growing, rural or faced with other educational challenges. Overall, the study found, 471 out of 501 school districts in Pennsylvania are currently spending

below their adequacy levels, and Pennsylvania's system of public education is underfunded by \$4.38 billion (25.4 percent more than current spending).

"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.

But, advocates stress that the commission should not be cause for delay from the Governor or General Assembly. "We urge Governor Rendell and the General Assembly to use 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," added Kintisch.

"We applaud House Education Committee members for their bold leadership in passing House Resolution 460," concluded Risch. "The General Assembly must now 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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