

WHAT DOES OUR BROKEN STATE SCHOOL FUNDING SYSTEM MEAN FOR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES?

"I didn't speak English when I started in kindergarten. I was very poor, one of seven children, and I made it because I had the right teachers, and I had the right resources. And I know that every single child who gets those same things can make it."

- Dr. Damaris Rau, School District of Lancaster's Superintendent

The trial that could completely reshape the way schools are funded in Pennsylvania recently wrapped up after weeks of illuminating testimony in Commonwealth Court about how the state's school funding system leaves students who need the most with the least, specifically because of where they live.

The testimony in the trial was illuminating - especially testimony from petitioner school districts. Here's what we learned about one of those districts, Panther Valley, which is representative of the difficulties faced by districts in all parts of the commonwealth:

- Lancaster receives \$4,510 less per student than the state benchmark for adequate funding adopted by the legislature.
- More than 90% of students in the School District of Lancaster are economically-disadvantaged. Nearly 8 in 10 are students of color and almost 20% are English learners.
- Here is what they face because of years of inadequate, unfair funding:
 - Elementary teacher Amanda Aikens said she and her students must deal with rust and mold, rodents, and roaches.
 - There are only four reading specialists to serve 6,000 elementary students. The district does not have math interventionists at any grade level. In addition to these needs, Aikens says the district is short on counselors and psychologists. The speech pathologist and counselor in her school each work in a closet.

"We have non-secure entryways. We have roofs that leak. We have bricks crumbling outside. We have boilers that break. We need space that kids deserve. Our kids deserve things that kids deserve in neighboring school districts." Matthew Przywara, Chief of Finances and Operations

It's no wonder, with all these obstacles, that students in Lancaster consistently score below state benchmarks on standardized tests.

Without a substantial increase along the lines of what Governor Wolf has proposed this year, thousands of kids will go without the basics because of where they live. The state has the money to make this kind of investment in 2022-23, and we cannot let our kids fall further behind.

CLOSE PENNSYLVANIA'S **\$4.6B** PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING GAP

Property taxes are rising, and public schools are struggling.

A major down payment in the FY 2022-23 budget is an urgent necessity.