

AFTER THE BUDGET PROPOSAL, THE HARD WORK BEGINS

With his recent proposal for funding public education for next fiscal year, Governor Shapiro acknowledged the critical task ahead for Pennsylvania lawmakers and advocates. Due in part to the Commonwealth Court ruling in the historic school funding lawsuit that declared the funding system in Pennsylvania to be unconstitutional, the governor and the legislature are now collectively charged with taking steps toward the goal of ensuring that all students, no matter where they live, have the resources necessary to receive an adequate and equitable public education.

It was reported that [Republican legislators will not appeal the Commonwealth Court ruling](#). That is an important acknowledgement that the state's school funding system is broken, unjust, and inadequate, and that it has left too many children behind. Now the hard work begins:

- The \$12 billion available in state surplus and reserves this year offers a rare opportunity to pass a budget that does more than keep up with inflation. The wide, unconstitutional funding gap is estimated to be more than \$4 billion. Closing that gap won't happen overnight, but one tool for closing the gap is through the [Level Up supplement](#). The Level Up supplement accelerates funding to the 100 school districts that have been most impacted by decades of underfunding – it sends a portion of new state education funding to the districts with the greatest need – and guarantees that it will be recurring.
- In 2021-22, \$100 million of new funding was distributed through the Level Up stream. An additional \$225 million is being funneled through this funding mechanism this year. Level Up funding becomes part of a school district's base funding for the following years. It is important to note, though, **that there is no new Level Up funding included in Governor Shapiro's budget proposal**. That's why PA Schools Work is calling for the General Assembly to distribute another \$300 million through Level Up this year, on top of, not instead of, new Basic Education Funds distributed through the fair funding formula.
- The Commonwealth Court specifically ruled that the state was not investing enough funding in our public schools to deliver what all students need. While school privatization advocates attempted to appropriate the decision to push a "school choice" agenda, the truth is that **not only is there no mention of vouchers in the 786-page decision, but an expansion of vouchers that moves money out of the public schools - the very schools that the decision identifies as already under resourced - will exacerbate the problem**. The constitutional mandate is to provide a thorough and efficient public school system so that kids can have the resources needed to succeed in those public schools where they already live.
- Pennsylvania leaders know that this year's final budget must ultimately go beyond the governor's proposal to demonstrate a serious commitment to fixing what the Court has affirmed – an unconstitutional system. Earlier this year, [PA Schools Work proposed increasing school funding by \\$2.3 billion this year](#), including \$700M for Basic Education Funding and \$300M for Level Up, along with sizable investments in special education (\$237M), an important investment in school facilities (\$500M), and career technical education (\$214M).

PA Schools Work and public education advocates across the commonwealth look forward to working with legislative leaders and Governor Shapiro toward an ambitious investment in our schools in this year's budget.

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

Property taxes are rising, and public schools are struggling.