

IN PENNSYLVANIA, OUR SCHOOL FUNDING SYSTEM IS BROKEN - NOT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND NOT OUR EDUCATORS. THAT DISTINCTION IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT.

Where schools have the funding they need across Pennsylvania, academic performance and post-secondary readiness are not declining. We know that:

- We can trace the disparity of outcomes in our schools. In the recent Commonwealth Court ruling on Pennsylvania's school funding system, the Court acknowledged something we have known for some time - that a lack of adequate funding is leading to a disparity in meaningful opportunities for students to succeed academically, socially, and civically in many districts across the Commonwealth.
- The court found that our funding system is discriminatory. Students in low-wealth school districts are being deprived of their constitutional right to equal protection under the law. The Court's decision states that the legislature has "an obligation to provide a system of public education that does not discriminate against students based on the level of income and value of taxable property in their school districts." But the legislature has failed to do so.
- Growing up in the right zip code in Pennsylvania can change a student's entire educational experience. Due to a deep reliance on local wealth, Pennsylvania has one of the widest gaps between wealthy and low-wealth school districts of any state in the country, and our students and educators are experiencing inequity at outrageous and damaging levels. The disparity in resources is so wide that the most well-off districts spend over \$100,000 more per classroom than the poorest districts.

There is no doubt that Pennsylvania's public schools need effective teachers and principals, a rigorous and adaptive learning system, and an evenhanded foundation of support all held to the highest standard of excellence and efficiency. Many districts in the state, because of their ability to leverage abundant local property tax revenue to complement often less-than-adequate state funding, are doing just that.

But students in school districts with insufficient local wealth to draw from are too often going without basic, time-tested educational resources.

"Educators credibly testified to lacking the very resources state officials have identified as essential to student achievement, some of which are as basic as safe and temperate facilities in which children can learn," the court wrote in its decision." Educators also testified about being forced to choose which few students would benefit from the limited resources they could afford to provide, despite knowing more students needed those same resources."

In short: we know what it looks like when districts across Pennsylvania are adequately funded. The Commonwealth Court decisions laid it out for all the see - when PA public schools are correctly resourced, PA schools work.

The question now is, are legislators going to make a commitment to increase funding for public schools so the districts that are behind the curve can make meaningful investments to catch up to high-performing districts? Or will they obfuscate and avoid legitimate conversations about what our schools need - and what the state appellate courts say they are constitutionally mandated to have?

The ball is in their court.

CLOSE PENNSYLVANIA'S **\$4.6B** PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING GAP
Property taxes are rising, and public schools are struggling.