BASIC EDUCATION FUNDING COMMISSION

The 2023 Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC), established by the General Assembly, will continue its work this fall with a series of hearings where it will gather testimony from educators and education policy experts. An important part of that work is to develop a plan to ensure that public education is adequately and equitably funded in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in accordance with the Court's decision. Governor Shapiro made it clear in his budget address in March that the General Assembly should get to work, saying:

> "[The judge's] remedy was for us to get around the table and come up with a solution that ensures every child has access to a thorough and efficient education."
>
> - Josh Shapiro, 2023 Budget Address, March 7, 2023

The BEFC is the table he is referring to.

To fulfill the Court's mandate, the BEFC must not only review the distribution of funding via the Fair Funding Formula, but also identify **how much each district needs** for the state to meet its constitutional obligation that every student receives a "meaningful opportunity to succeed academically, socially, and civically."

Years of underfunding have set districts in all corners of the state back – rural, urban, and suburban districts alike have been unable to meet their obligations to PA students and families. This underfunding results in larger class sizes, outdated curricula, outdated and crumbling school facilities, fewer teachers and support staff, and administrators left scrambling to make ends meet for their students.

The BEFC must identify the steps needed to ensure our public schools will, in the very near future, give every child the public education they are entitled to. **Failing to address the larger questions would not only fail to meet our moral and constitutional obligations but would be a dereliction of duty that betrays our children.**
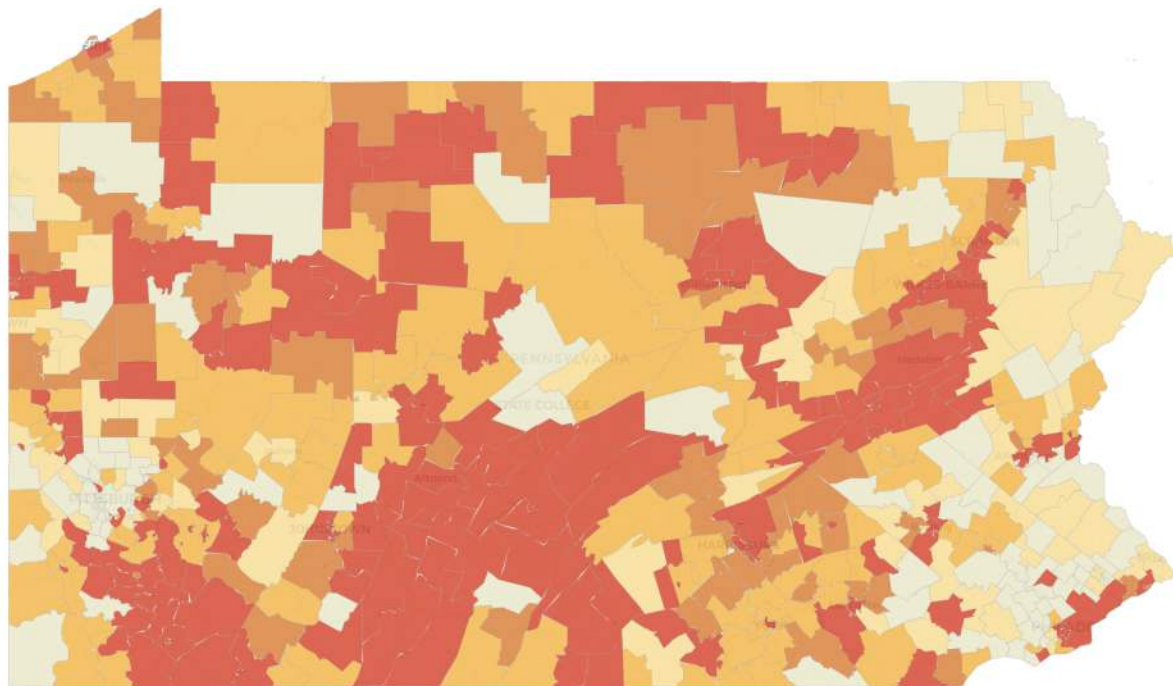
Without a clear and thorough calculation of how much each district needs to meet the constitutional obligation to its students (known as adequacy targets), the **BEFC's job will be incomplete.**

PA Schools Work has identified four priorities for the BEFC to address in its final report, which is due on January 11, 2024.

- [ ] **Determine the total cost to meet the constitutional standard. This is accomplished by establishing a meaningful adequacy target for each school district** as part of the formula that determines how much each district needs to provide its children with a comprehensive, effective, contemporary education, and how the funds will be distributed to the districts.

- [ ] **Calculate funding targets that also address unmet needs beyond K-12 basic education funding** that were identified by the Court as critical to ensuring meaningful opportunities for all PA public school students, such as facilities, special education, and pre-K.

- [ ] **Ensure that the state meets its constitutional obligation by establishing a fair and equitable "state share" for those targets** so that low-wealth school districts can reach adequate funding at a reasonable tax effort.

- [ ] **Create a plan, with a reasonable timeline, for the state to meet its share of those targets** – a roadmap for the governor and state legislature to meet their constitutional mandate.

IF THE BEFC DOES NOT RETURN A FINAL REPORT WITH A PLAN FOR EACH OF THESE FOUR PRIORITIES, IT WILL FAIL IN ITS CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

UNDERFUNDING ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

$0	UP TO $999	UP TO $2,999	UP TO $3,999	$4,000 +

Color key: School funding adequacy gaps per student, based on the funding required for each district to provide the same level of resources as successful Pennsylvania districts currently do, relative to their students' needs.

Source: Basic Education Funding Commission testimony of Dr. Matthew Kelly, professor, Penn State College of Education. Delivered Sept. 12, 2023

REPORT CARD

Basic Education Funding Commission

CRITERIA	CIRCLE GRADE
Set adequacy target for ALL 500 school districts	A B C D F
Include pre-K, special education, facilities, and transportation	A B C D F
Set state share target	A B C D F
Lay out reasonable timeline	A B C D F