

STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS MEAN A STRONGER ECONOMY AND A STRONGER DEMOCRACY

Following the release of a report from the Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC), and as the General Assembly considers the FY 2024-25 budget proposal from the Shapiro Administration, notably the K-12 education proposal, it is a good time to recognize that we all have a stake in how the General Assembly responds.

The BEFC was charged with developing a response to Judge Jubelirer's decision in the school funding lawsuit, which held that every student in Pennsylvania should have—but does not now have—access to a “comprehensive, effective, and contemporary system of public education,” as required by the Pennsylvania Constitution. Governor Shapiro's proposal is a down payment on rectifying that problem.

The educational ideals of the founders of our Constitution are supported by two decades of research showing that better K-12 education contributes to the vigor of both our democracy and our economy.

A [recent comprehensive report](#) shows that quality civic education leads to greater knowledge about the way our democracy works, stronger skills in critical thinking and collaborative action, greater respect for democratic norms and the rights of others, a greater sense of trust in one another and our political system, and higher rates of participation in public life.

The evidence for the positive impact of good public education on our economy is even broader.

Cross-national comparisons show that both additional years of schooling and higher quality schooling, as measured by standardized tests, lead to a more productive workforce and thus higher per capita gross domestic product. **The increase in education levels since the 19th century has been [estimated to account for between one-fifth and one-third of economic growth](#) in the United States.**

Cross-state research confirms these findings. High-wage, and thus high-prosperity, states are those with a well-educated workforce. Achievement levels are highly correlated—and are likely the cause of—faster economic growth in the states.

Sadly, partly because of our failure to adequately fund K-12 education, Pennsylvania falls at about the middle of the 50 states in GDP per capita. **If academic achievement in Pennsylvania matched that of the highest-ranked state in the country, Minnesota, [in two generations our state's GDP per capita would be roughly 225% higher than it would be with our current levels of academic achievement.](#)**

The great leaders who founded our public education system were prescient. The path they set us on is largely responsible for our ability to preserve our democracy and enhance our prosperity and democracy, but our state government has been shirking its constitutional responsibility. Governor Shapiro's proposal is a critical first step to closing the \$5.4 billion funding gap identified by the BEFC. His proposal recognizes the vital role that education plays in the success and well-being of our communities, and it is one that all state legislators should get behind.

LEARN MORE BY VISITING WWW.PASCHOOLSWORK.ORG

PASCHOOLSWORK.ORG

WWW

FACEBOOK.COM/PASCHOOLSWORK



TWITTER.COM/PASCHOOLSWORK

